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ARNOLD STUMBLES
Marc Cooper

CORRUPTION: A WINNER FOR DEMOCRATS
Christopher Hayes

THE SYRIAN DILEMMA
David Hirst

A CRIME TO DREAM
Edwidge Danticat

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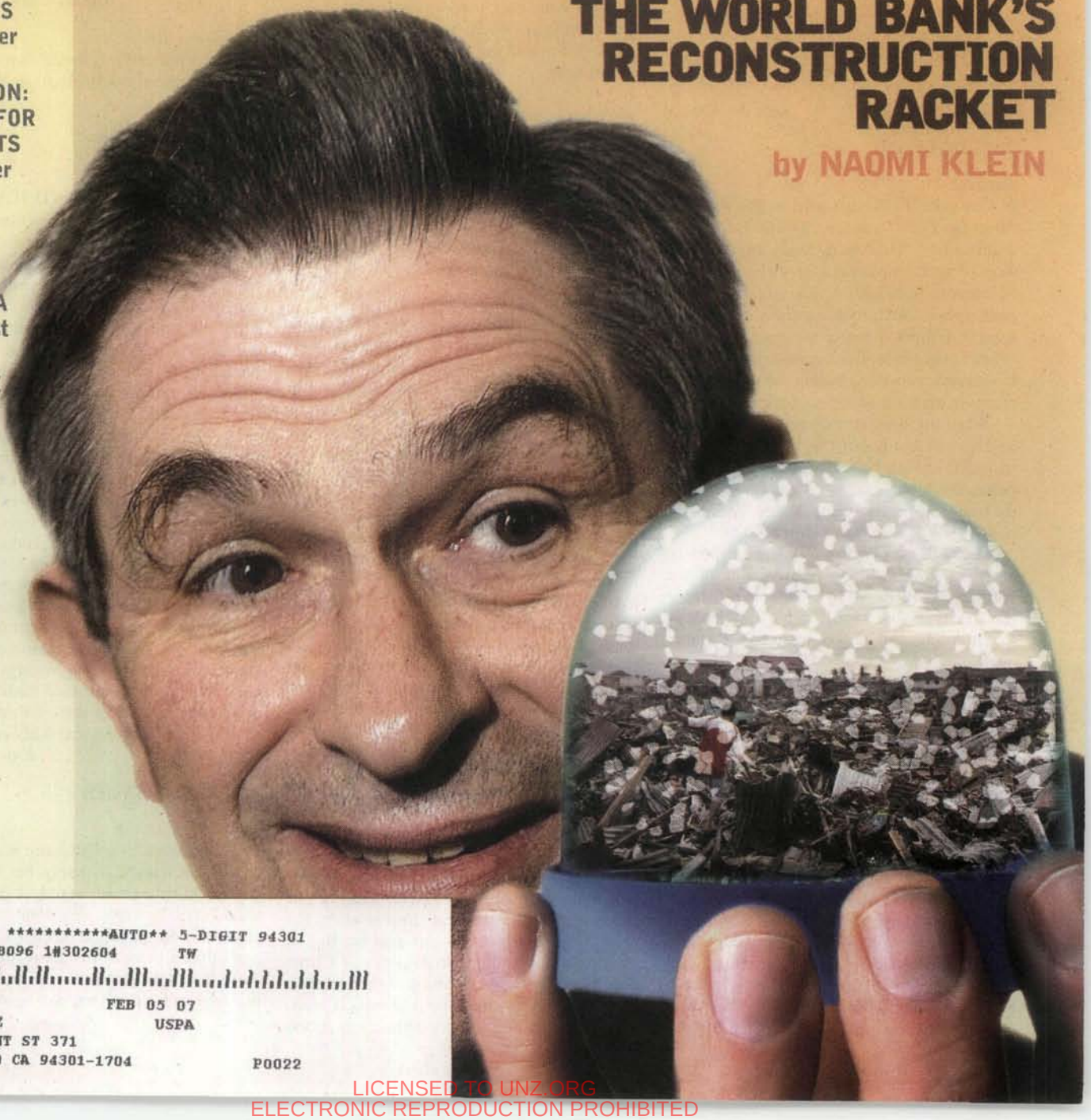
CAPITALIZING ON DISASTER

THE WORLD BANK'S RECONSTRUCTION RACKET

by NAOMI KLEIN



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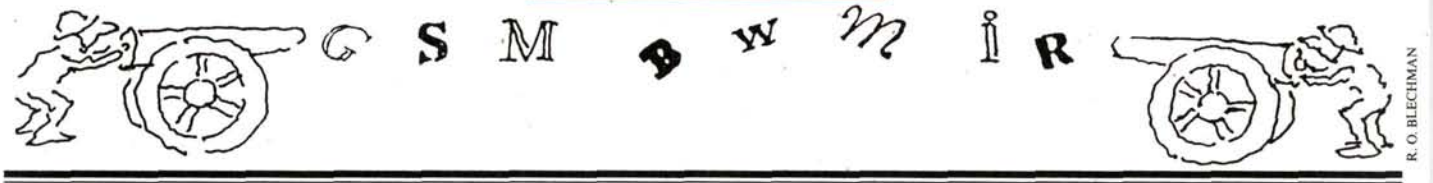

R. O. BLECHMAN

THE SAGE OF BALTIMORE

Stroudsburg, Pa.

■ While I generally find *The Nation* enlightening, howlers by its writers sadden me. The "famous Jewish sage" to whom Eric Alterman attributes the rejoinder "You may be right" ["Letters," April 18] was that goyish Baltimore wit H.L. Mencken, who replied to people who wrote him with postcards on which only that was written. My grandfather, who admired the curmudgeon, was proud of having one such.

PARIS FLAMMONDE

ALTERMAN REPLIES

New York City

■ You may be right. ERIC ALTERMAN

SUICIDE EFFECT

Rutledge, Pa.

■ Alexander Cockburn asks in his April 18 "Beat the Devil" column, "Death, Depression and Prozac": "How many times, amid the carnage of such homicidal sprees [the Red Lake, Minnesota, killings], do investigators find a prescription for antidepressants at the murder scene?" I think a better question would be, "How many times are such prescriptions there, but investigators don't bother to look for them, except in the most sensational murder cases?"

When my brother shot and killed himself and his wife last Labor Day in Norwich, Connecticut, leaving behind eleven children, the police couldn't have been less interested in the contents of his medicine cabinet. "What's the point?" they asked me. "He's dead."

I knew that my brother was deeply depressed and had started taking Effexor (one of the antidepressants linked to suicides in teenagers) just six days before. I spoke to him by telephone that morning, and he said he thought the antidepressant was "starting to kick in."

Three of his children, who witnessed the murder-suicide, reported that he behaved and spoke with unnatural calmness, even taking a few minutes after killing their mother to give his children instructions about cashing his paycheck and selling his vehicles. Then he calmly and without hesitation shot himself.

I confiscated his medications and reported this "adverse event" to the FDA's Medwatch. A week after the incident, the FDA announced that it planned to investigate the potential link between antidepressants and adult suicide. I think that antidepressants might be implicated in a lot more suicides and other violent acts than anyone knows. And as Cockburn indirectly points out in his discussion of the Wesbecker case, it is virtually impossible to successfully sue the manufacturers of these drugs, except in cases where the publicity is so awful that they will settle for "a confidential amount" just to turn the news spigot off. JODINE MAYBERRY

NAME 'EM & SHAME 'EM!—II

Olney, Md.

■ David Sirota states in the April 11 "In Fact…" that six Senate Democrats joined Republicans in voting against a measure to preserve soldiers' minimum bankruptcy protections from debts incurred when they leave better-paying jobs for service in Iraq. Would you identify them? I'd like to know who they are—and so would their constituents. SUSAN NERLINGER

The senators are: Max Baucus (MT), Joe Biden (DE), Robert Byrd (WV), Thomas Carper (DE), Tim Johnson (SD) and Ben Nelson (NE). In the words of Peter Dubuque of Malden, Massachusetts, "Let the tarring and feathering commence."

I ❤ MACCABEES

Rockville, Md.

■ Richard Goldstein criticizes Mel Gibson for departing from "the Hanukkah story most of us know" in an upcoming film about the Maccabees ["It's Easter: He Is Recut," April 11]. In fact, Gibson's version of the Hanukkah story as described by Goldstein is accurate. The rabbinic sages of yore, however, in their wisdom omitted the Book of Maccabees from the Jewish Bible, preferring not to glorify the war and fundamentalism at its heart. Instead they focused on the rededication of the desecrated Temple, emphasizing the myth of a single flask of oil burning for eight days. Hence, "the Hannukah story most of us know" is about lighting the menorah candles for eight days and eating foods fried in oil, like latkes and jelly donuts. As Goldstein points out, Gibson intends to resurrect and glorify the violence and fundamentalism that the rabbis shunned. By doing so, Gibson once again thumbs his nose at Judaism.

ED WALDMAN

East Rockaway, NY

■ Kudos to Richard Goldstein for his insightful commentary on *The Passion*. Goldstein cuts to the heart of the matter, the theological/political agenda of this portrayal of the muscular, rugged-individualist Christ persecuted (as many of our fundamentalist brethren see themselves) by the corrupt (secularized) powers that be. But as Goldstein points out, the struggles of Christ are absent. Perhaps as a result of that absence, Jesus' personality, indeed his personhood, is absent as well. He is little more than a prop, at best a symbolic self-portrait of the religious right's self-image as the innocent, stoic victim. The struggles of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels are what make the story more than just another poor guy being tortured, yet they are virtually absent in Gibson's picture, and the whole point, the resurrection, gets but a few seconds.

I saw the film with my teenage son. When I asked him what he thought of it, he said, "It was really bloody. I feel like it needs a sequel." As for me, I think the book is better.

THE REV. MARK J. LUKENS

Providence, RI

■ Re "It's Easter: He Is Recut": Someone should make a movie about the Inquisition.

NANCY GREEN

RATHER ANNOYED

New York City

■ Eric Alterman, in his April 11 "Liberal Media" column on Dan Rather, quotes from a *New York Post* column of mine. While I certainly stand by what I wrote, Alterman provides a misleading context. The column was not written, as Alterman implies, in reaction to Rather's resignation. It ran on September 22—when the controversy over the Bush National Guard story was first breaking, and when both Rather and CBS were still refusing even to consider that there might be problems with the piece or the memos.

Moreover, the line that Alterman quotes, about how conservatives convinced of liberal media bias "have found their smoking gun," was not written in response to Rather's resignation. It referred to something quite specific: the admission that "Rather's senior producer put [CBS source Bill] Burkett directly in touch with the Kerry campaign." Indeed, I contrasted this with Woodward and Bernstein's disclosure in *All the President's Men* that they'd spurned a request from the 1972 McGovern campaign for an advance look at an upcoming Watergate story, saying it would compromise their credibility. I don't mind being quoted, or even criticized—as long as the material is presented fairly and in proper context. ERIC FETTMANN

ALTERMAN REPLIES

New York City

■ Oh, I dunno. Eric Fettmann is angry about what I am alleged to imply, but I'd be more concerned if he could point to a problem with what I actually wrote. He's right that I took his comments on one aspect of the Rather *mishigas* and applied them to the entire affair, and I'm sorry if he feels that this provided a "misleading context." I don't happen to agree, but I'll

(Continued on Page 24)

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IN THIS ISSUE

2 **LETTERS**

EDITORIALS & COMMENT

3 PATRIOT ACT EVASIONS

4 WHAT I DIDN'T SEE IN IRAQ
Jim McGovern

6 THE TERMINATOR STUMBLES
Marc Cooper

11 IN FACT...

COLUMNS

6 DEADLINE POET
Tom DeLay and the Courts
Calvin Trillin

7 BEAT THE DEVIL
Message in a Bottle
Alexander Cockburn

8 SUBJECT TO DEBATE
Andrea Dworkin, 1946–2005
Katha Pollitt

9 LOOKOUT
The Rise of Disaster Capitalism
Naomi Klein

ARTICLES

13 A CRIME TO DREAM
Women seeking refuge in the United States receive a cold welcome.
Edwidge Danticat

16 CORRUPTION—A PROVEN WINNER
It led to Democratic control in Illinois.
Christopher Hayes

20 THE SYRIAN DILEMMA
The retreat from Lebanon threatens the survival of the regime in Damascus.
David Hirst

BOOKS & THE ARTS

25 MOAVENI: Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran
DE BELLAIGUE: In the Rose Garden of the Martyrs: A Memoir of Iran
Meline Toumani

30 HAJJAR: Courting Conflict: The Israeli Military Court System in the West Bank and Gaza
Neve Gordon

34 FILMS
The Man Who Copied
Save the Green Planet!
Fever Pitch

Cover by Gene Case & Stephen Kling/ Avenging Angels; illustrations by R.O. Blechman, Stephen Kling and Caitlin Dover

EDITORIALS

Patriot Act Evasions

Memo to Congress: Whenever Attorney General Alberto Gonzales starts talking like a, you know, sort of likably dodgy teenager confronted with dings on the family car, it's time to pay close attention. In the first round of Congressional hearings into the Patriot Act, the normally precise Gonzales took on the oily grammar of evasion whenever he was pressed on a core civil liberties issue: "Let me, kind of, reassure the committee and the American people" (on snooping into library and medical records). "That's a difficult question that requires, sort of, a case-by-case analysis" (on rendition of prisoners to regimes with a record of torture). Gonzales is playing at friendly conciliation. But his studied defense of the Patriot Act and broader incursions on constitutional checks and balances are if anything more disturbing than the diatribes that emanated from his predecessor.

The sunset review of the Patriot Act marks a singular opportunity for Congress to catalogue abuses and rethink the Administration's rights-shredding approach to security. The Administration's obsession with secrecy makes a proper evaluation difficult, but the limited evidence so far available is alarming. Through January 2005 the Justice Department served at least 155 "sneak-and-peek" search warrants, undermining the fundamental American tradition requiring reasonable notice of searches and seizures. Many of those secret warrants involved not terrorism but conventional prosecution for violent crime and drugs—a broadening of police power with no national-security justification. Personal records have been seized on thirty-five occasions. And then there is what is not knowable. The expanded use of secret courts to hear secret evidence, particularly against foreign nationals but against citizens as well: Secret evidence was apparently a factor in the wrongful arrest of attorney Brandon Mayfield for what proved to be nonexistent connections to the Madrid bombing. The growing unease across party lines was unmistakable. Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy blasted "the Administration's destruction of legitimate oversight" while former GOP Representative Bob Barr argued that national security "has taken precedence" over protecting civil liberties.

There is great risk that Congress will settle for technical fixes that limit the most highly publicized Patriot Act powers, or procrastinate on serious reform with another two years of sunset review. The Patriot Act, for all its noxiousness, is the symptom, not the disease—or rather, the gateway drug for an Administration addicted to the expansion of unaccountable executive-branch power. When Congress passed the act in 2001, not even its critics foresaw the full breadth of the Administration's sustained assault on civil liberties and the rule of law, against which federal courts are now in open revolt. For all his charm, the new Attorney General showed his true colors when senators Ted Kennedy and Patrick Leahy pressed the issue of rendition and the torture convention. Far from his highly hyped spirit of compromise, Gonzales replied three separate times with determinedly evasive logic: Prisoners should be kept away from abusive regimes only "when we believe it's more likely than not that they will be tortured."

It is precisely because the Patriot Act is so deeply implicated in wider human rights abuses that mere technical fixes are not enough. Instead of amending the law, Congress should pass the Security and Freedom Enhancement Act, the bipartisan bill introduced in the Senate by Dick Durbin, Larry Craig and Russ Feingold. With its broad liberal/conservative base and grassroots support—recently Montana's House of Delegates, in the heart of NRA country, urged Congressional passage—SAFE makes political sense. The point is to raise the floor on civil liberties: Not kind of, not sort of, but definitively restore the Bill of Rights and the rule of law.

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COMMENT

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What I Didn't See in Iraq

"Trust me when I tell you things are so much better in Iraq," said one US military official to me on my recent visit to that war-ravaged country. I didn't know whether to scream or pull the remaining two strands of hair out of my head. I was in Iraq as part of a delegation of eight members of Congress, led by House minority leader Nancy Pelosi. Everything we have been told about Iraq by the Bush Administration has either been an outright lie or overwhelmingly false. There were no weapons of mass destruction; we have not been greeted as liberators; and the cost in terms of blood and treasure has outpaced even their worst-case scenarios. Trust is something I cannot give to this Administration.

If things in Iraq are so much better, why are we not decreasing the number of US forces there? Why is the insurgency showing no signs of waning? Why are we being told that in a few months the Administration will again ask Congress for billions of dollars more to fight the war? Why, according to the World Food Program, is hunger among the Iraqi people getting worse? It's time for some candor, but candor is hard to come by in Iraq.

We were in Iraq for one day—for security reasons, it is US policy that Congressional delegations are not allowed to spend the night. We spent most of our time in the heavily fortified Green Zone, which serves as coalition headquarters. It's the most heavily guarded encampment I've ever seen—and it still gets attacked. I even had armed guards accompany me to the bathroom. The briefings we received from US military and diplomatic officials were, to say the least, unsatisfying. The Nixonian approach that our military and diplomatic leaders have adopted in dealing with visiting members of Congress is aimed more at saving face than at engaging in an honest dialogue. At first, our briefers wanted to get away with slick slide presentations, but we insisted on asking real questions and attempting to get real answers.

During one such briefing, Lieut. Gen. David Petraeus, tasked with overseeing training of Iraqi security forces, informed us that 147,000 Iraqis had been trained. That sounded good to me. Perhaps we could start reducing the number of American forces, I suggested. But upon further questioning, General Petraeus conceded that less than one-fourth of the 147,000 were actually "combat capable." Why didn't he say that to begin with? I asked—respectfully—our military and diplomatic officials what the gap was between the Iraqis we have trained and the number we needed to train in order to draw down the number of US troops. I could not get a straight answer.

During the morning of our visit, US military officials crowed about a recent operation in which Iraqi security forces had killed eighty-five insurgents. By the afternoon, when more reports came in, it was unclear how many insurgents had actually been killed and whether the Iraqi security forces had exaggerated their own actions.

I asked both General Petraeus and our embassy about US plans to build military bases in Iraq, which in my view would indicate a prolonged US presence. I was told—emphatically—that

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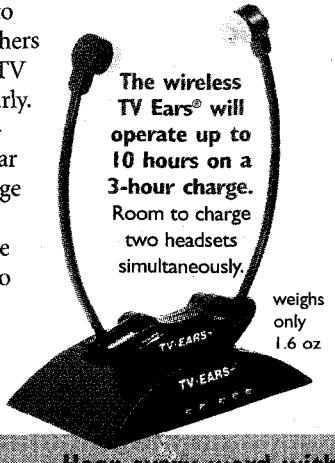

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COMMENT

there are no plans to construct military bases. Yet Congress recently passed a huge supplemental wartime appropriations bill that includes, at the request of the Bush Administration, $500 million for military base construction. In Iraq.

Shortly before we traveled to Iraq we visited Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who lamented the mistakes the United States has made post-invasion, including the total dissolution of all the Iraqi security forces. He said, "The army you disbanded is now the army you're fighting." But I couldn't get a single US official to acknowledge any mistakes. The standard line remains, "We're moving in the right direction."

It's hard to believe that after a two-year occupation the average Iraqi isn't getting tired of the overwhelming US presence. We met with several Iraqi women leaders, including members of the National Assembly, who told us that there was more electricity available in Iraq before the invasion than afterward. It's also certain that the insurgency uses our presence as an organizing tool to recruit members and weapons. While we can all be encouraged by the turnout in the recent Iraqi elections, it is impossible for the Iraqi people to truly determine their own fate in a climate where there is no security.

And while US officials point to a declining number of coalition casualties, there is still an unacceptably high level of violence in Iraq. One military leader told us they can tell that things are changing for the better because when US helicopters fly over certain areas of Iraq, Iraqis wave. Well, I took a helicopter ride (it's too dangerous to drive) from the Baghdad airport to the Green Zone wearing an armored vest and sandwiched between two heavily armed American soldiers who were pointing their guns down at the ground. I suggested to the military leader that perhaps he was confusing a wave with a plea to not shoot.

Our young men and women in uniform are performing their difficult duties extraordinarily well. Indeed, the only honest and direct responses I got from any American in Iraq were from the soldiers. They told me they had been instructed by their superiors to not share any complaints with visitors.

What worries me almost as much as our misguided policy in Iraq is the fact that so many of my colleagues and so many citizens have become resigned to the fact that the war will go on. Congress is not being inundated with letters and phone calls and faxes and e-mails and street protests demanding an end to our presence in Iraq. President Bush's re-election seems to have taken much of the energy out of the antiwar movement. My recent visit to Iraq only strengthened my belief that this war is wrong. And only renewed, passionate dissent by the American people can end it.

JIM MCGOVERN

Jim McGovern represents the Third Congressional District of Massachusetts.

CALVIN TRILLIN

TOM DELAY AND THE COURTS

The courts, DeLay believes, have run amok.
He's catalogued the wrongs that must be righted.
If he already rails against the courts,
Just think of how he'll feel once he's indicted.

The Terminator Stumbles

Los Angeles

It was a real Hollywood moment on April 7, when California's hard-charging, seemingly invincible Governator stood before the news cameras and rather meekly announced he was giving up, for the time being, on his proposal to shift public employee pensions into private accounts. No accident that his dramatic backdown came the same day a major poll showed his job-approval rating slipping below 50 percent for the first time since he took office. That was only the topping on a mounting heap of bad news for the governor. For the past several weeks, Schwarzenegger's public appearances have brought out crowds—sometimes in the thousands—of rowdy demonstrators, mostly from the ranks of organized labor. Even some of his onetime allies in police and public-safety unions joined the protests. The noisy demonstrations and falling poll numbers have boldly underlined the governor's precipitous political decline and his now uncertain future in office.

After Schwarzenegger replaced his highly unpopular predecessor, Gray Davis, in late 2003, he was buoyed by significant bipartisan support and stratospheric popularity ratings. The Democrat-controlled California legislature, which had been irked by the departing Davis, worked closely with Schwarzenegger to fashion measures on the budget and on reform of workers' compensation. This past summer, Schwarzenegger was even able to enlist powerful liberal unions in his successful renegotiation of state compacts with wealthy Indian gambling tribes.

Things started heading in a more problematic and confrontational direction a few months ago when the governor seemed to start obsessing about nurses, teachers and other public employees. Apart from the pension privatization scheme, Schwarzenegger was also proposing a merit pay plan for teachers and an erosion of their tenure, as well as diverting $2 billion away from public school funding. The celebrity hero who came to power promising to sweep Sacramento of special interests was now not only raising more millions from industry than any previous governor but also seemed to be picking only on organized labor.

"It was a classic rookie mistake," says veteran GOP consultant Allen Hoffenblum. "Arnold didn't understand that in California the nurses, the teachers, the cops, the sheriffs are all really unions"—by which he means their members are powerful and generally liked. "For years we Republicans have tried to figure out how to take on these unions without looking like

(Continued on Page 11)

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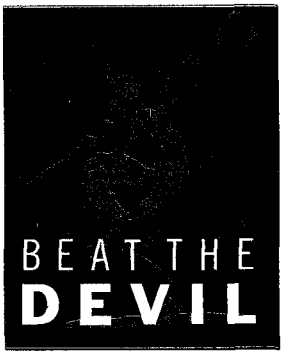
ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Message in a Bottle



Plachimada, Kerala

Whizzing along the road in the little Tata Indica, driven *prestissimo* by the imperturbable Sudhi, we crossed the state line from Tamil Nadu into Kerala, branched off the main road and ended up in the settlement of Plachimada, mostly inhabited by extremely poor people. There on one side of the street was the Coca-Cola plant, among the company's largest in Asia, and on the other a shack filled with locals eager to impart the news that they were now, as of April 2, in Day 1,076 of their struggle against the plant.

Coca-Cola came to India in 1993, looking for water and markets in a country where 170 million people have no access to drinking water, with shortages growing daily. The bloom was on neoliberalism back then, with central and state authorities falling over themselves to lease, sell or simply hand over India's assets to multinationals in the name of economic "reform."

Coca-Cola had sound reasons for coming to Plachimada, which has large underground water deposits. The site Coca-Cola picked is between two large reservoirs and ten yards south of an irrigation canal. Coke's plot is surrounded by colonies inhabited by several hundred poor people with an average holding of four-tenths of an acre. Virtually the sole source of employment is wage labor, usually for no more than 100 to 120 days in the year.

Ushered in by Kerala's present "reform"-minded government, the plant duly got a license from the local council, known as the Perumatty Grama Panchayat. Under India's constitution panchayats have total discretion in such matters. Coca-Cola bought a property of some forty acres held by a couple of large landowners, built a plant, sank six bore wells and commenced operations in March 2000.

Within six months the villagers saw the level of their water drop sharply, and the water they did draw was awful. It gave some people diarrhea and bouts of dizziness. To wash in it was to get skin rashes, a burning feel on the skin. It left their hair greasy and sticky. The women found that rice and dal did not get cooked but became hard. A thousand families were directly affected, and well water was tainted a considerable distance from the plant.

The locals, mostly very low in caste status, had never had much beyond good water and a bit of land from the true earth-shaking reforms of Kerala's Communist government, democratically elected in 1957 and evicted two years later with US assistance by a central government terrified by the threat of a good example. On April 22, 2002, the locals commenced peaceful agitation that shut the plant down. Responding to popular pressure, the panchayat rescinded its license to Coca-Cola on August 7, 2003.

All of this was amiably conveyed to us in brisk and vivid detail by the villagers. Then Mylamma, an impressive woman, led us down a path to one of the local wells. It was a soundly built square well, some ten feet from side to side. About five feet from the top we could see the old water line, but no water. Peering twenty feet farther down in the semidarkness, we could see a stagnant glint. Today, in a region known as the rice bowl of Kerala, women have to walk a two-and-a-half-mile round trip to get drinkable water, toting big plastic vessels on their hip or head. Even better-off folk face ruin.

The whole process would play well on *The Simpsons*. It has a ghastly symmetry to it. When the plant was running at full tilt, eighty-five truckloads rolled out of the plant gates, each load consisting of 550 to 600 cases, twenty-four bottles to the case, all containing Plachimada's prime asset, water, now enhanced in cash value by Coca-Cola's infusions of its syrups.

Coca-Cola certainly "gave back" to Plachimada, in the form of profuse daily donations of foul wastewater and stinking toxic sludge from the plant's filtering and bottle-cleaning processes. The company told the locals the sludge was good for them, dumping loads of it in the surrounding fields and on the banks of the irrigation canal and heralding it as free fertilizer. Aside from stinking so badly it made old folk and children sick, people coming into contact with it got rashes and kindred infections, and the crops that it was supposed to nourish died. Several lab analyses done in India and Britain have found the sludge toxic with cadmium and lead and useless as fertilizer, a finding that did not faze Coca-Cola's Indian vice president, Sunil Gupta, who swore the sludge was "absolutely safe" and "good for crops."

Plachimada's member of Parliament in Delhi is Veerendra Kumar, who is also chairman and managing director of *Mathrubhumi*, a newspaper that sells over a million copies a day in Malayalam, Kerala's language. Kumar, a forceful man in his late 60s (and formerly a federal minister), tells me that for the past two years *Mathrubhumi* has refused, with serious loss of revenue, to run ads for Coca-Cola's products. Kumar includes in his ban ads for Pepsi, which he says has a plant six miles from Plachimada that has produced the same problems.

The locals won't let the plant reopen, to the consternation of Kerala's present pro-Coke government, which has tried, unconstitutionally, to overrule the local council and hopes the courts will grease Coca-Cola's wheels. Kerala's High Court did just that in early April, and the panchayat is now taking its case to the Supreme Court of India.

Drive along almost any road here and you'll see coconut palms. What Keralites term tender coconut water really is good for you. Ask any local rat. A trio of biochemists at the University of Kerala recently put rats on it, and their levels of cholesterol and triglycerides sank significantly, with antioxidant enzymes putting up a fine show. For the rats dosed on Coca-Cola the test readings weren't pretty, starting with "short, swollen, ulcerated and broken villi in the intestine [and] severe nuclear damage."

Taking a leaf out of the self-realization catechism, Coca-Cola flaunts its slogan in Hindi, *Jo chahe ho jahe*, meaning "Whatever you want, happens," which has been translated by women cursed by another Coca-Cola plant, up in Maharashtra, as *Jo Coke chahe ho jahe*, "Whatever Coke wants, happens."

But not in Plachimada. ■

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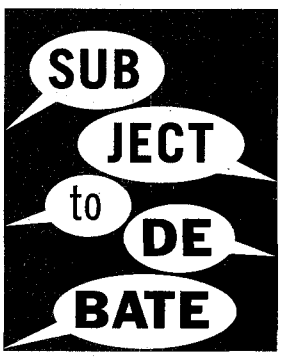
KATHA POLLITT

Andrea Dworkin, 1946–2005



I first heard of Andrea Dworkin in 1968. She had been arrested in an antiwar demonstration and jailed at the old Women's House of Detention in Greenwich Village, where male doctors subjected her to brutal internal exams. Her name was in the news because she had gone public with her story. My good, kind, radical, civil libertarian parents thought this was ridiculous. What did she expect, this privileged white woman, this "Bennington girl"? It wasn't that they didn't believe her, exactly. It was that they didn't see why she was making such a big, princessy fuss. It was like getting arrested and complaining about the food.

Andrea Dworkin died on April 9 at 58—she of the denim overalls and the wild hair and wilder pronouncements. Although she denied ever uttering the most famous soundbite attributed to her, that all intercourse is rape, she came pretty close: "Fucking is the means by which the male colonizes the female"; "in seduction, the rapist often bothers to buy a bottle of wine." She argued that pornography was an instruction manual for rape, that women had the right to "execute" rapists and pedophiles; toward the end of her life she declared that maybe women, like the Jews, should have their own country. The counsel of despair, and crazy, too—but by then Dworkin was ill, not much in demand as a speaker and several of her major books were out of print. The 1980s were long over: On campus, the militant anti-rape marches and speakouts of Take Back the Night had morphed into cheery V-Day, which marries antiviolence activism to a celebration of women's sexuality.

The antipornography feminism Dworkin did so much to promote seems impossibly quaint today, when Paris Hilton can parlay an embarrassing sex video into mainstream celebrity and the porn star Jenna Jameson rides the *New York Times* bestseller list. But even in its heyday it was a blind alley. Not just because porn, like pot, is here to stay, not just because the Bible and the Koran—to say nothing of fashion, advertising and Britney Spears—do far more harm to women, not even because of the difficulty of defining such slippery terms as "degrading to women," a phrase that surely did not mean the same thing to Dworkin as it did to the Christian conservatives who helped make the antiporn ordinance she wrote with Catharine MacKinnon briefly law in Indianapolis. Like the temperance movement, antiporn activism mistook a symptom of male dominance for the cause. Nor did it have much to do with actually existing raped and abused women. "For God's sake, take away his Nina Hartley videos" is not a cry often heard in shelters or emergency rooms. If by magic pornography vanished from the land, women would still be the second sex—underpaid, disrespected, lacking in power over their own bodies. Rape, battery, torture, even murder would still be hugely titillating to both sexes, just as in Shakespeare's day, and women would still be blamed, by both sexes, for the violence men inflict on them. What made Dworkin's obsession with pornography so bizarre is that she herself should have known it for a diversion. After all, she frequently pointed out that male dominance is entwined with our very notion of what sex is, with what is arousing, with what feels "right." Like Foucault (who, as Susan Bordo pointed out, usually gets credit for this insight), Dworkin showed how deeply and pervasively power relationships are encoded into our concepts of sexuality and in how many complex ways everyday life normalizes those relationships. "Standards of beauty," she wrote in *Woman-Hating* (1974), "describe in precise terms the relationship that an individual will have to her own body. They prescribe her motility, spontaneity, posture, gait, the uses to which she can put her body. They define precisely the dimensions of her physical freedom. And of course, the relationship between physical freedom and psychological development, intellectual possibility, and creative potential is an umbilical one." Somewhere along the way, she lost interest in the multiplicity and the complexity of the system she did much to lay bare.

Dworkin was an oversimplifier and a demagogue. She wouldn't debate feminists who opposed her stance on porn, just men like Alan Dershowitz, thus reinforcing in the public mind the false impression that hers was the only feminist position and that this was a male-female debate. There is some truth to Laura Miller's quip in *Salon* that "even when she was right, she made the public conversation stupider." But, frankly, the public conversation is usually not very illuminating, and on the subject of women has been notably dim for some time. At least Dworkin put some important hidden bits of reality out there on the table. There *is* a lot of coercion embedded in normal, legal, everyday sexuality: Sometimes the seducer *is* a rapist with a bottle of wine. A whole world of sexist assumptions lay behind my parents' attitude back in 1968: This is what happens to women who take chances, male brutality is a fact of life, talking about sexual violence is shameful, "Bennington girls" should count their blessings. Polite, liberal, reasonable feminists could never have exploded that belief system.

Andrea Dworkin was a living visual stereotype—the feminist as fat, hairy, makeup-scorning, unkempt lesbian. Perhaps that was one reason she was such a media icon—she "proved" that feminism was for women who couldn't get a man. Women have wrestled with that charge for decades, at considerable psychic cost. These days, feminism is all sexy uplift, a cross between a workout and a makeover. Go for it, girls—breast implants, botox, face-lifts, corsets, knitting, boxing, prostitution. Whatever floats your self-esteem! Meanwhile, the public face of organizational feminism is perched atop a power suit and frozen in a deferential smile. Perhaps some childcare? Insurance coverage for contraception? Legal abortion, tragic though it surely is? Or maybe not so much legal abortion—when I ran into Naomi Wolf the other day, she had just finished an article calling for the banning of abortion after the first trimester. Cream and sugar with that abortion ban, sir?

I never thought I would miss unfair, infuriating, over-the-top Andrea Dworkin. But I do. And even more I miss the movement that had room for her. ■

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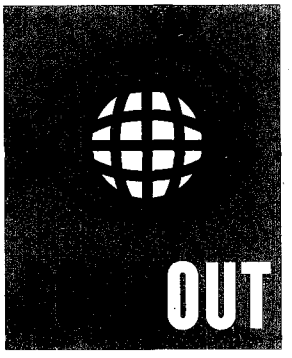
NAOMI KLEIN

The Rise of Disaster Capitalism



Last summer, in the lull of the August media doze, the Bush Administration's doctrine of preventive war took a major leap forward. On August 5, 2004, the White House created the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, headed by former US Ambassador to Ukraine Carlos Pascual. Its mandate is to draw up elaborate "post-conflict" plans for up to twenty-five countries that are not, as of yet, in conflict. According to Pascual, it will also be able to coordinate three full-scale reconstruction operations in different countries "at the same time," each lasting "five to seven years."

Fittingly, a government devoted to perpetual pre-emptive deconstruction now has a standing office of perpetual pre-emptive reconstruction.

Gone are the days of waiting for wars to break out and then drawing up ad hoc plans to pick up the pieces. In close cooperation with the National Intelligence Council, Pascual's office keeps "high risk" countries on a "watch list" and assembles rapid-response teams ready to engage in prewar planning and to "mobilize and deploy quickly" after a conflict has gone down. The teams are made up of private companies, nongovernmental organizations and members of think tanks—some, Pascual told an audience at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in October, will have "pre-completed" contracts to rebuild countries that are not yet broken. Doing this paperwork in advance could "cut off three to six months in your response time."

The plans Pascual's teams have been drawing up in his little-known office in the State Department are about changing "the very social fabric of a nation," he told CSIS. The office's mandate is not to rebuild any old states, you see, but to create "democratic and market-oriented" ones. So, for instance (and he was just pulling this example out of his hat, no doubt), his fast-acting reconstructors might help sell off "state-owned enterprises that created a nonviable economy." Sometimes rebuilding, he explained, means "tearing apart the old."

Few ideologues can resist the allure of a blank slate—that was colonialism's seductive promise: "discovering" wide-open new lands where utopia seemed possible. But colonialism is dead, or so we are told; there are no new places to discover, no *terra nullius* (there never was), no more blank pages on which, as Mao once said, "the newest and most beautiful words can be written." There is, however, plenty of destruction—countries smashed to rubble, whether by so-called Acts of God or by Acts of Bush (on orders from God). And where there is destruction there is reconstruction, a chance to grab hold of "the terrible barrenness," as a UN official recently described the devastation in Aceh, and fill it with the most perfect, beautiful plans.

"We used to have vulgar colonialism," says Shalmali Guttal, a Bangalore-based researcher with Focus on the Global South. "Now we have sophisticated colonialism, and they call it 'reconstruction.'"

It certainly seems that ever-larger portions of the globe are under active reconstruction: being rebuilt by a parallel government made up of a familiar cast of for-profit consulting firms, engineering companies, mega-NGOs, government and UN aid agencies and international financial institutions. And from the people living in these reconstruction sites—Iraq to Aceh, Afghanistan to Haiti—a similar chorus of complaints can be heard. The work is far too slow, if it is happening at all. Foreign consultants live high on cost-plus expense accounts and thousand-dollar-a-day salaries, while locals are shut out of much-needed jobs, training and decision-making. Expert "democracy builders" lecture governments on the importance of transparency and "good governance," yet most contractors and NGOs refuse to open their books to those same governments, let alone give them control over how their aid money is spent.

Three months after the tsunami hit Aceh, the *New York Times* ran a distressing story reporting that "almost nothing seems to have been done to begin repairs and rebuilding." The dispatch could easily have come from Iraq, where, as the *Los Angeles Times* just reported, all of Bechtel's allegedly rebuilt water plants have started to break down, one more in an endless litany of reconstruction screw-ups. It could also have come from Afghanistan, where President Hamid Karzai recently blasted "corrupt, wasteful and unaccountable" foreign contractors for "squandering the precious resources that Afghanistan received in aid." Or from Sri Lanka, where 600,000 people who lost their homes in the tsunami are still languishing in temporary camps. One hundred days after the giant waves hit, Herman Kumara, head of the National Fisheries Solidarity Movement in Negombo, Sri Lanka, sent out a desperate e-mail to colleagues around the world. "The funds received for the benefit of the victims are directed to the benefit of the privileged few, not to the real victims," he wrote. "Our voices are not heard and not allowed to be voiced."

But if the reconstruction industry is stunningly inept at rebuilding, that may be because rebuilding is not its primary purpose. According to Guttal, "It's not reconstruction at all—it's about reshaping everything." If anything, the stories of corruption and incompetence serve to mask this deeper scandal: the rise of a predatory form of disaster capitalism that uses the desperation and fear created by catastrophe to engage in radical social and economic engineering. And on this front, the reconstruction industry works so quickly and efficiently that the privatizations and land grabs are usually locked in before the local population knows what hit them. Kumara, in another e-mail, warns that Sri Lanka is now facing "a second tsunami of corporate globalization and militarization," potentially even more devastating than the first. "We see this as a plan of action amidst the tsunami crisis to hand over the sea and the coast to foreign corporations and tourism, with military assistance from the US Marines."

As Deputy Defense Secretary, Paul Wolfowitz designed and

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oversaw a strikingly similar project in Iraq: The fires were still burning in Baghdad when US occupation officials rewrote the investment laws and announced that the country's state-owned companies would be privatized. Some have pointed to this track record to argue that Wolfowitz is unfit to lead the World Bank; in fact, nothing could have prepared him better for his new job. In Iraq, Wolfowitz was just doing what the World Bank is already doing in virtually every war-torn and disaster-struck country in the world—albeit with fewer bureaucratic niceties and more ideological bravado.

"Post-conflict" countries now receive 20–25 percent of the World Bank's total lending, up from 16 percent in 1998—itself an 800 percent increase since 1980, according to a Congressional Research Service study. Rapid response to wars and natural disasters has traditionally been the domain of United Nations agencies, which worked with NGOs to provide emergency aid, build temporary housing and the like. But now reconstruction work has been revealed as a tremendously lucrative industry, too important to be left to the do-gooders at the UN. So today it is the World Bank, already devoted to the principle of poverty-alleviation through profit-making, that leads the charge.

Reconstruction work has been revealed as a tremendously lucrative industry, too important to be left to the do-gooders at the UN.

And there is no doubt that there are profits to be made in the reconstruction business. There are massive engineering and supplies contracts ($10 billion to Halliburton in Iraq and Afghanistan alone); "democracy building" has exploded into a $2 billion industry; and times have never been better for public-sector consultants—the private firms that advise governments on selling off their assets, often running government services themselves as subcontractors. (Bearing Point, the favored of these firms in the United States, reported that the revenues for its "public services" division "had quadrupled in just five years," and the profits are huge: $342 million in 2002—a profit margin of 35 percent.)

But shattered countries are attractive to the World Bank for another reason: They take orders well. After a cataclysmic event, governments will usually do whatever it takes to get aid dollars—even if it means racking up huge debts and agreeing to sweeping policy reforms. And with the local population struggling to find shelter and food, political organizing against privatization can seem like an unimaginable luxury.

Even better from the bank's perspective, many war-ravaged countries are in states of "limited sovereignty": They are considered too unstable and unskilled to manage the aid money pouring in, so it is often put in a trust fund managed by the World Bank. This is the case in East Timor, where the bank doles out money to the government as long as it shows it is spending responsibly. Apparently, this means slashing public-sector jobs (Timor's government is half the size it was under Indonesian occupation) but lavishing aid money on foreign consultants the bank insists the government hire (researcher Ben Moxham writes, "In one government department, a single international consultant earns in one month the same as his twenty Timorese colleagues earn together in an entire year").

In Afghanistan, where the World Bank also administers the country's aid through a trust fund, it has already managed to privatize healthcare by refusing to give funds to the Ministry of Health to build hospitals. Instead it funnels money directly to NGOs, which are running their own private health clinics on three-year contracts. It has also mandated "an increased role for the private sector" in the water system, telecommunications, oil, gas and mining and directed the government to "withdraw" from the electricity sector and leave it to "foreign private investors." These profound transformations of Afghan society were never debated or reported on, because few outside the bank know they took place: The changes were buried deep in a "technical annex" attached to a grant providing "emergency" aid to Afghanistan's war-torn infrastructure—two years before the country had an elected government.

It has been much the same story in Haiti, following the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. In exchange for a $61 million loan, the bank is requiring "public-private partnership and governance in the education and health sectors," according to bank documents—i.e., private companies running schools and hospitals. Roger Noriega, US Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, has made it clear that the Bush Administration shares these goals. "We will also encourage the government of Haiti to move forward, at the appropriate time, with restructuring and privatization of some public sector enterprises," he told the American Enterprise Institute on April 14, 2004.

These are extraordinarily controversial plans in a country with a powerful socialist base, and the bank admits that this is precisely why it is pushing them now, with Haiti under what approaches military rule. "The Transitional Government provide[s] a window of opportunity for implementing economic governance reforms...that may be hard for a future government to undo," the bank notes in its Economic Governance Reform Operation Project agreement. For Haitians, this is a particularly bitter irony: Many blame multilateral institutions, including the World Bank, for deepening the political crisis that led to Aristide's ouster by withholding hundreds of millions in promised loans. At the time, the Inter-American Development Bank, under pressure from the State Department, claimed Haiti was insufficiently democratic to receive the money, pointing to minor irregularities in a legislative election. But now that Aristide is out, the World Bank is openly celebrating the perks of operating in a democracy-free zone.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have been imposing shock therapy on countries in various states of shock for at least three decades, most notably after Latin America's military coups and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yet many observers say that today's disaster capitalism really hit its stride with Hurricane Mitch. For a week in October 1998, Mitch parked itself over Central America, swallowing villages whole and killing more than 9,000. Already impoverished countries were desperate for reconstruction aid—and it came, but with strings attached. In the two months after Mitch struck, with the country still knee-deep in rubble, corpses and mud, the Honduran congress initiated what the *Financial Times* called "speed sell-offs after the storm." It passed laws allowing the privatization of airports, seaports and highways

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and fast-tracked plans to privatize the state telephone company, the national electric company and parts of the water sector. It overturned land-reform laws and made it easier for foreigners to buy and sell property. It was much the same in neighboring countries: In the same two months, Guatemala announced plans to sell off its phone system, and Nicaragua did likewise, along with its electric company and its petroleum sector.

All of the privatization plans were pushed aggressively by the usual suspects. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, "the World Bank and International Monetary Fund had thrown their weight behind the [telecom] sale, making it a condition for release of roughly $47 million in aid annually over three years and linking it to about $4.4 billion in foreign-debt relief for Nicaragua."

Now the bank is using the December 26 tsunami to push through its cookie-cutter policies. The most devastated countries have seen almost no debt relief, and most of the World Bank's emergency aid has come in the form of loans, not grants. Rather than emphasizing the need to help the small fishing communities—more than 80 percent of the wave's victims—the bank is pushing for expansion of the tourism sector and industrial fish farms. As for the damaged public infrastructure, like roads and schools, bank documents recognize that rebuilding them "may strain public finances" and suggest that governments consider privatization (yes, they have only one idea). "For certain investments," notes the bank's tsunami-response plan, "it may be appropriate to utilize private financing."

As in other reconstruction sites, from Haiti to Iraq, tsunami relief has little to do with recovering what was lost. Although hotels and industry have already started reconstructing on the coast, in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia and India, governments have passed laws preventing families from rebuilding their oceanfront homes. Hundreds of thousands of people are being forcibly relocated inland, to military style barracks in Aceh and prefab concrete boxes in Thailand. The coast is not being rebuilt as it was—dotted with fishing villages and beaches strewn with handmade nets. Instead, governments, corporations and foreign donors are teaming up to rebuild it as they would like it to be: the beaches as playgrounds for tourists, the oceans as watery mines for corporate fishing fleets, both serviced by privatized airports and highways built on borrowed money.

In January Condoleezza Rice sparked a small controversy by describing the tsunami as "a wonderful opportunity" that "has paid great dividends for us." Many were horrified at the idea of treating a massive human tragedy as a chance to seek advantage. But, if anything, Rice was understating the case. A group calling itself Thailand Tsunami Survivors and Supporters says that for "businessmen-politicians, the tsunami was the answer to their prayers, since it literally wiped these coastal areas clean of the communities which had previously stood in the way of their plans for resorts, hotels, casinos and shrimp farms. To them, all these coastal areas are now open land!"

Disaster, it seems, is the new *terra nullius*. ■

Additional research was provided by Aaron Maté and Debra Levy.

COMMENT

(Continued From Page 6)

we're trashing individual teachers and police widows. What we concluded is that we couldn't! Someone should have told this to Arnold."

Schwarzenegger has been raising the big bucks and collecting hundreds of thousands of signatures in a threat to hold a special election this fall. If the legislature doesn't meet his terms, he vows, he will go directly to the voters and ask them to approve his teacher merit-pay plan, the private pension proposal, a political redistricting measure and a budget spending cap. So his sudden pullback of the private pension plan is the first serious crack in the Terminator's armor, an implicit recognition by him that he was losing the initiative and had been outflanked by his mad-as-hornets union opposition. While Schwarzenegger was still only in the planning phase for the possible November election, his energized labor-based opposition had already escalated into campaign mode.

Schwarzenegger's falter has emboldened the Democratic legislature, which might now be willing to call the governor's bluff and go head-to-head with him in the special election he has threatened. In any case, Schwarzenegger enters the next round of negotiations with state lawmakers holding a markedly weakened hand.

MARC COOPER

Marc Cooper, a Nation *contributing editor, is a senior fellow at the Institute for Justice and Journalism at the USC Annenberg School for Communication.*

In Fact ...

PASSINGS

Peter Kornbluh writes: The international community lost a world-class citizen when John O'Leary died of Lou Gehrig's disease at age 58 on April 2. O'Leary, a former mayor of Portland, Maine, served as US Ambassador to Chile during the period when General Pinochet was detained in London and eventually charged in Chile with human rights crimes. An avid *Nation* reader, O'Leary championed the declassification of more than 24,000 US government documents on Chile, presented copies to the Chilean national library and insisted that the documents all be posted on the State Department website. He helped to recover history; he helped to redress history, and in so doing he helped to make history.

ON THE WEB

■ Watch the recent debate between *The Nation* and *The Economist* on "What's Good for Wal-Mart Is Good for America?" (www.freespeech.org). It will also be broadcast on C-SPAN, date to be announced.

NEWS OF THE WEAK IN REVIEW

■ One witness not heard at John Bolton's confirmation hearings was Jesse Helms, who said in January 2001: "John Bolton is the kind of man with whom I would want to stand at Armageddon, if it should be my lot to be on hand for what is forecast to be the final battle between good and evil in this world."

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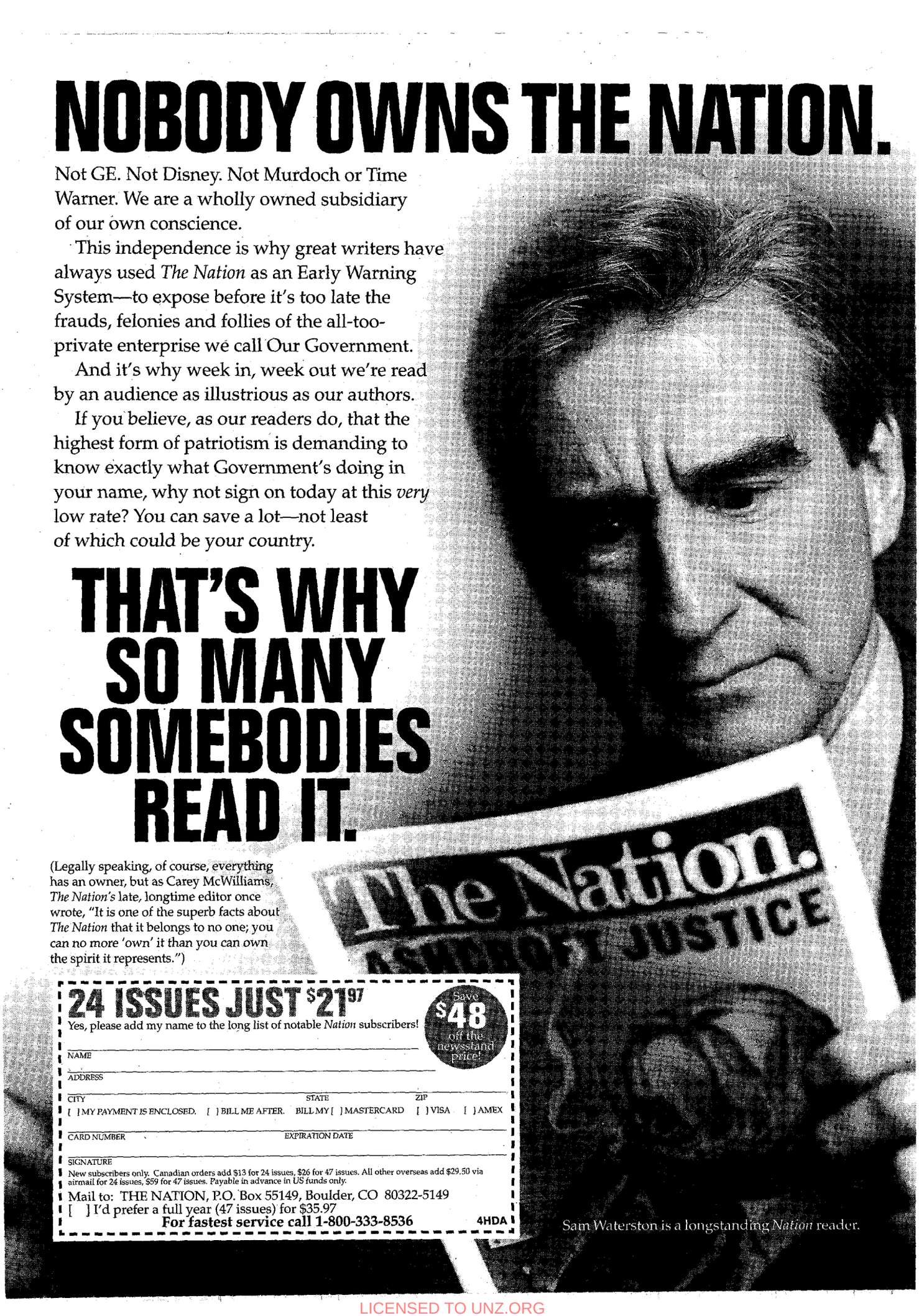

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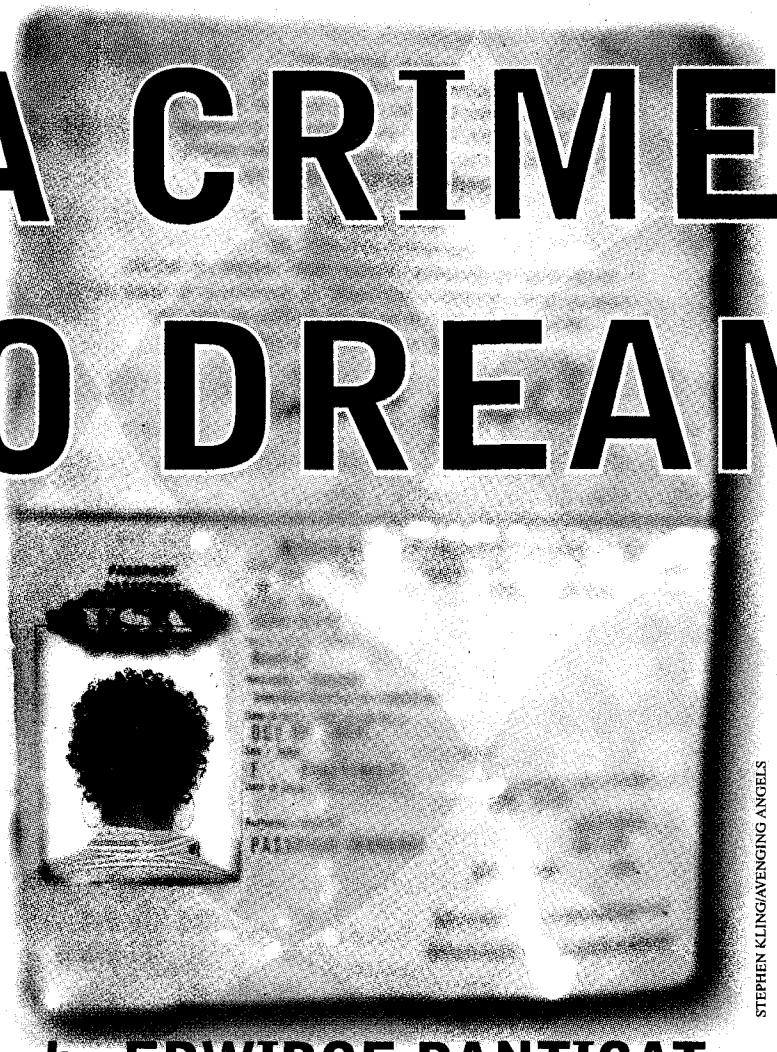
ARTICLES

A CRIME TO DREAM



STEPHEN KLING/AVENGING ANGELS

by EDWIDGE DANTICAT

On April 15, 1984, Rodi Alvarado, a 16-year-old Guatemalan girl, married Francisco Osorio, a soldier five years her senior. They had known each other only a short time, but societal pressures—the average marriage age in her province was 15—encouraged the union. Soon after the wedding Osorio moved Alvarado from her small town to Guatemala City, the capital, where he continued his often brutal army work.

"The military in Guatemala has tremendous authority," Alvarado declared in her February 7, 1996, application for political asylum in the United States. "Soldiers have the authority to kill people, on the spot, if they commit a wrong—or even if they do not." In her asylum application and in a recent interview, she detailed the harrowing story that follows.

Often drunk after work, Alvarado's husband would brag to her about the many heinous acts he'd participated in. He would describe how he and his colleagues had tossed babies in the air and shot at them, how they had burned down houses with the inhabitants inside. Then he would beat her.

He would beat her mercilessly, sometimes until she was unconscious, all the while telling her that he was only treating her the same way he was treated by the military. "What they demand of me, I demand of you," he'd say. "Nothing scares me, because of what they've done to me in the army."

Alvarado endured constant verbal and physical abuse through two pregnancies and the births of her children. Her husband kicked her in the spine and tried to force her to abort. After their births he continued to beat her openly, in the house, on the street, on the bus, at the local drinking hole. He once hit her face so hard that he dislocated her jaw. A punch in the eye made her fear she might lose her sight. At times he would drag her down the street by her hair and strike her head against a car, a window or whatever was nearby. He would pistol-whip her and kick her with his boots, but since he was a soldier and carried a gun, no one could intervene, not even her own frightened family members.

The beatings soon escalated into daily episodes of rape. The rapes, both vaginal and anal, resulted in constant abdominal pain, hemorrhaging and venereal diseases.

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In December 1994, ten years after she'd married Osorio, Alvarado finally tried to escape by moving to another part of town with her young children. Her husband found her, threatened her, beat her and then left. Two months later he begged her to return home, telling her he had changed. She went back with him, she says, "for the children's sake."

The thrashings soon started again, this time with electrical cords, machetes and knives. He would throw knives at her hands and would cut her if she didn't move fast enough. One night he struck her on her arm with a machete and threatened to chop off her limbs if she tried to escape again.

Thinking it was her only way out, Alvarado attempted suicide by taking a handful of pills. The pills only made her sluggish, however, and she later had to flush them out of her system with water. When Osorio found out, he scoffed and told her she could die if she wanted to, but was not going to leave him any other way.

Every year, thousands of women arrive in the United States seeking refuge. Many are essentially handed back to their torturers.

Since her husband was in the military, seeking help from Guatemalan authorities was risky, Alvarado stresses in a soft, tearful voice. Still, she filed several complaints with the police, who sent her home, saying they couldn't interfere in family matters. With no shelters or resources for victims of domestic violence available, Alvarado felt she had only two choices left: "flee or die."

Flee she did. While her children were with their paternal grandparents and Osorio was at work, Alvarado got on a bus heading for the United States. Her journey from Guatemala City through Mexico to Brownsville, Texas, took two days. When she tried to board a plane in Brownsville to San Francisco, where one of the other women on the bus was headed, she was questioned by immigration officials, but she failed to mention her history of severe domestic abuse, fearing that it wouldn't be considered a compelling enough reason for an asylum claim. A year would go by before she would file the asylum application detailing her plight.

In 1996 she was granted asylum by an immigration judge, only to have the decision reversed by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) three years later. In 2001 then–Attorney General Janet Reno personally "vacated" the BIA's reversal, sending the case back for the panel to decide. In 2003 Attorney General John Ashcroft took the case away from the BIA to decide it himself. He held it for two years and only sent it back to the BIA, without a personal determination, right before he left office in January 2005, an identical decision to Janet Reno's, but one that has now extended Rodi Alvarado's asylum limbo to nearly a decade.

Every year, thousands of women like Alvarado arrive in the United States seeking refuge from unimaginable horrors. However, a large percentage of them are interdicted on the high seas or turned away at borders and airports and are essentially handed back to their torturers. Many of those who are "lucky" enough to get past the airport inspectors or border patrols are deported after hasty hearings or are imprisoned for months, and sometimes years, at a time.

Rose Thermitus was only 16 when she and 200 other Haitians landed in Key Biscayne, Miami, on October 29, 2002. Coinciding with the late-afternoon news hour, her arrival was captured live on national television, her desperate effort to wade ashore witnessed by millions of viewers. Rose and her older brother Franquelyn had boarded a boat in the north of Haiti after their home was burned down. Their parents had disappeared and are presumed dead. Nevertheless, both Rose's and Franquelyn's asylum requests were denied, and after ten months in detention Franquelyn was returned to Haiti. Because of a Haitian government policy against issuing travel documents to minors without parental consent, Rose could not be deported. However, she was held in a local hotel for thirteen months. Rose was finally paroled on January 7, 2004, a few months shy of her eighteenth birthday. She is subject to deportation now that she is 18.

Like Rose, Fauziya Kassindja Tijani was still in her teens when she arrived at Newark Airport in December 1994, after fleeing a forced marriage and female genital cutting in Togo, West Africa. In her searing memoir *Do They Hear You When You Cry*, she describes her fourteen-month detention in excruciating detail. "I had been beaten," she recalls, "teargassed, kept in isolation until I nearly lost my mind, trussed up in chains like a dangerous animal, strip-searched repeatedly, and forced to live with criminals, even murderers.... My teachers in Africa said that America was a great country. It was the land of freedom, where people were supposed to find justice. But I was delivered to a dark corner of America where there was no justice. There was only cruelty, danger, and indifference."

In some cases, this cruelty is further aggravated by sexual abuse. A 2001 Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children investigation documented a number of sexual-assault cases at the Krome Detention Center in Miami, where several female asylum seekers became the victims of guards who "preyed on their vulnerability and uncertain immigration status to force them into sexual activities." (Krome has since stopped detaining women at its facilities but has transferred them to local jails and in some cases hotels.) The abuse and sometimes invasive and inhumane conditions that these women face in jail—including strip-searches, sleep deprivation, overcrowding, lack of medical care and access to lawyers and family members—further adds to their trauma and impairs their abilities to present their cases clearly and adequately to already skeptical immigration judges.

Some of the most egregious cases, says Cheryl Little, executive director of the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, involve women who are separated from their families or are detained in area hotels with their kids. "Mothers and their small children are locked up twenty-four hours a day, this despite a pool and fitness center located on their premises. Adults and children have gone months without a haircut, comb or a change of underclothes."

"It's heartbreaking," says Marleine Bastien, a Miami-based

Edwidge Danticat is the author, most recently, of The Dew Breaker *(Vintage).*

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social worker and activist and executive director of Haitian Women of Miami, who regularly visits the women and children at the hotels. "Children under 6 are confined to a motel room with their mothers for months with no access to recreation or fresh air, at taxpayers' expense. Some of the women are so depressed that they want to kill themselves."

"Something has gone wrong with our country," adds Lisa Frydman, Rose Thermitus's Miami-based attorney, "when we detain innocent, asylum-seeking women and children. They literally have their spirit broken in detention. They can't understand, after all their struggle, why they are put in jail in the land of the free."

In 1985 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees recommended that women facing inhumane treatment for having "transgressed the social mores" of their society be considered a "particular social group" and be granted asylum. However, according to Karen Musalo, director of the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies at the University of California Hastings College of the Law, who's served as counsel for both Alvarado and Kassindja Tijani, "The way we think about refugees is a male paradigm. If a man is tortured with electric shock during war, most people would say of course he deserves asylum. If a woman is raped during war, or is a victim of domestic violence, we don't consider it a form of persecution."

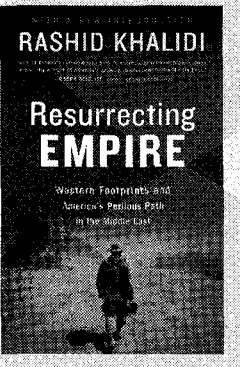
In a 1996 landmark decision, Kassindja Tijani ultimately received political asylum, becoming the first woman to be granted such status on the basis of female genital mutilation. According to Musalo, however, the United States still has no uniform, binding regulations or statutes on gender-based asylum, only advisory guidelines that do not need to be considered by higher-level decision-makers such as immigration judges, the Board of Immigration Appeals or even the Attorney General, whose authority over the detention process has expanded thanks to the aggressive efforts of John Ashcroft in the wake of the September 11 attacks.

"September 11 was a great tragedy," says Musalo, "but the second tragedy coming from it is that in the process of protecting ourselves, we are also destroying the kinds of ideals that this country stands for."

Among the many reservations that immigration officials seem to have about granting asylum to women fleeing gender-based persecution, according to Musalo, is the "floodgates" argument, or the fear that every woman who is abused in another country will seek asylum in the United States. Or, "You get a punch in the mouth and you're free," as someone once remarked to her. In reality, the women who most need to do so lack the resources to escape and make it to the United States. Also, many countries, like Australia and Canada, offer gender-based asylum and are not flooded with such cases. Musalo notes that "the United States may soon stand alone among industrialized nations in its refusal to fully acknowledge that women who suffer serious gender-based violations of their fundamental human rights are entitled to protection as refugees."

Kassindja Tijani, now married and a mother of triplets, has spent the years since her release speaking out against female genital cutting and the mistreatment of asylum seekers. "I lost my childhood when I came here," she says. "Sometimes I have

Intelligence at Home and Abroad



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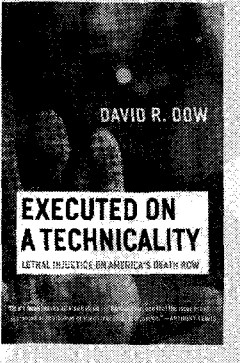

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nightmares, finding myself behind bars, and I would wake up in a cold sweat."

A college graduate with a BS in accounting and business law, she hopes that the benchmark decision in her case is not reversed through an asylum denial for Rodi Alvarado. "I pray that it wouldn't happen," she says. "I hope women like me will continue to find shelter in this country."

"Rodi Alvarado's case is tremendously important," says Musalo, "because it will determine whether the United States will continue the positive steps it took with its grant of protection to Fauziya Kassindja Tijani—or whether it will attempt to renege on its promise of protection to women. A denial to Rodi would spell tragedy for the many women who escape to the United States seeking protection from the multitude of human rights violations that women in today's world suffer. The fact that Ashcroft left office without deciding this case shows how controversial the issue continues to be."

"I really hope to succeed," Alvarado, now 37, adds from San Francisco, where she works as a housekeeper in a convent for retired nuns while awaiting a final outcome in her case. While describing both the cruelty and kindness she encountered upon her arrival in the United States, she says she'd like to one day counsel other women who are victims of domestic violence. Even though she greatly misses her two children, who remained behind in Guatemala, and is unable to visit her mother, who is ill with cancer, she's still glad she came here.

"The United States has been very good to me," she says. "At least here, I've been able to survive."

Haunted by the plight of the many women she's encountered in her work, Marleine Bastien wrote a poem to honor the hundreds, if not thousands, of women who are in detention and are unable to speak for themselves:

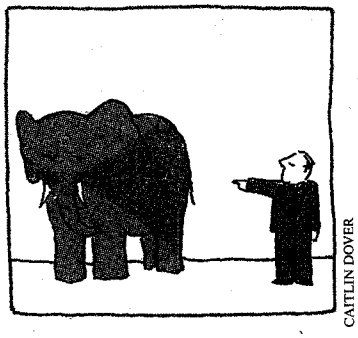
we are the women of the world
in search of a safe haven...
Is it a crime to want a future?
Is it a crime to want to live?
Is it a crime to dream? ■

HELPED BY THE ISSUE, DEMOCRATS DOMINATE GOVERNMENT IN A FORMER SWING STATE.

Corruption—a Proven Winner

CHRISTOPHER HAYES

On election night 2002, hundreds of Illinois Democrats—politicians, supporters and activists—crowded into the Finkl Steel plant on Chicago's near North Side. They munched Chicago-style dogs, pounded cans of Old Style beer and waited expectantly for confirmation of what everyone already suspected: Illinois Democrats had kicked ass. Rod Blagojevich (whose father had worked at Finkl Steel) had beaten Attorney General Jim Ryan to become the first Democratic governor in twenty-five years. Democrats swept the rest of the state's races, ending the night in control of both houses of the legislature and every statewide office but treasurer. At 11 PM Blagojevich took the stage to the sounds of his favorite musician, Elvis, and told the crowd he was "all shook up" and filled with "a whole bunch of hunka-hunka burnin' love for each one of you!" It was a corny line, but the crowd was too euphoric to notice.


CAITLIN DOVER

I went home buzzing with excitement, having almost forgotten I'd neglected to check the returns from outside the state. It wasn't until I listened to a series of increasingly dejected messages from my brother that I realized what a disaster the night had been.

Such is the state of politics in Illinois: a bizarro-world inverse of the rest of the country, where Democrats dominate all branches of government, set the debate and drive policy, while Republicans are beset by nasty, public intramural squabbles between moderates and extremists and grasp for a coherent message. Election night 2004 looked a lot like the one we rang in at Finkl Steel: Barack Obama won his Senate seat by a forty-three-point margin over Alan Keyes, and newcomer Melissa Bean, a businesswoman from the suburbs of Chicago, defeated Phil Crane, the longest-serving Republican incumbent in the House. In the wake of the almost-too-awful-to-watch spectacle of Keyes's candidacy (whose intent, one Republican quipped to me, seemed to be to get the lowest percentage of the vote possible), the state GOP is practically on life support.

It wasn't always like this. For much of the twentieth century, Illinois was the quintessential swing state, the Ohio of its day. Its state government tilted toward moderate Republicans. It voted for the winner in the presidential election twenty-one of twenty-four times in the twentieth century through 1996, going for Reagan in 1980 and 1984, George Bush I in 1988 and Clinton in 1992 and 1996. The rock-ribbed Republican suburban "collar" counties around Chicago canceled out the heavily Democratic city, leaving the fate of statewide elections to the fiercely independent voters downstate. Now the state looks like a Democratic lock—Gore and Kerry both won it by double-digit margins—and in these dark days you've got to wonder, How did this happen? And are there any lessons to be gleaned for Democrats elsewhere?

Christopher Hayes is a contributing editor of In These Times *and the Chicago editor of the forthcoming* Just Cause *magazine.*

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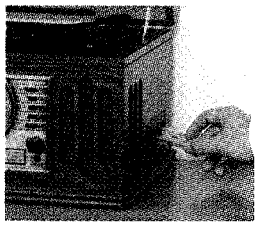

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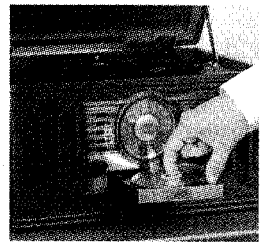

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Local observers use the term "perfect storm" to describe the confluence of disparate factors that has produced such a true-blue state, but it's clear that demographic changes account for much of the transformation. Over the past decade, both Chicago and its surrounding suburbs have been getting progressively more Democratic as a result of the widespread migration of black and Latino families into the collar counties, an influx of immigrants and the rightward tilt of the national GOP on social issues, which has alienated many suburban moderates. Also, as John Judis and Ruy Teixeira argue in their book *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, the transition of the regional economy from manufacturing to service and technology has brought with it a substantial number of professionals with graduate degrees, a group that increasingly forms a bedrock Democratic constituency.

Regrettably, Illinois's freshly minted suburban Democrats can't be exported to red states to help pad the party's margins. But demographic changes are far from the whole story behind Illinois's political makeover; the indicted former Republican Governor George Ryan has a lot to do with it as well. "What has caused the collapse really goes back to corruption," says Dan Proft, president of the conservative journal *Illinois Leader*. "It goes back to a former governor who's awaiting federal trial; it goes back to more than seventy convictions of people from Ryan's administration in the last three years. It really goes back to a systematic undercurrent of corruption that's been part of Illinois politics for a long time."

'We can't be perceived as a party that's made up of crooks, or we're just not going to win.' —former GOP Governor Jim Edgar

Before his term as governor, Ryan served as Secretary of State, where he ran an office that was a den of cronyism and corruption. Employees were pressured to contribute to his campaign, and to acquire the cash necessary for these donations they routinely offered driver's licenses in exchange for bribes. In 1994 a truck driver who had several DUI convictions caused the tragic death of six children when the tail-light assembly from his truck fell off and lodged in the fuel tank of the family's van, causing it to explode. When, in a subsequent lawsuit, depositions suggested that the driver had ignored fellow truckers' advice to fix his truck and had acquired his license through a bribe, the local media and the US Attorney General's office pounced. The fallout from the licenses-for-bribes scandal has driven state political news coverage for the past four years, and decimated the GOP.

In 2002, as the scandal was reaching a fever pitch, Blagojevich won the gubernatorial race by successfully exploiting the taint of scandal against his opponent, Attorney General Jim Ryan, who, while neither related to nor implicated in the scandal, had the misfortune of sharing the same political party and last name as George Ryan. Blagojevich ran a barrage of ads showing side-by-side pictures of Jim Ryan and George Ryan, and promised to clean up state government and pass ethics reform.

But the damage done by licenses-for-bribes has reverberated well past that election, tarnishing the entire Republican brand in the state. When in last year's US Senate race Republican nominee Jack Ryan went down in flames after sealed divorce records revealed he had pressured his wife into attending sex clubs, there was a general "here we go again" feeling to the coverage, despite the fact that Jack Ryan's sins were venial and George Ryan's mortal. (As a side note, it probably hasn't helped things that Republicans keep nominating candidates with the same surname as the indicted governor.) Melissa Bean attributes at least some of her support to scandal fatigue among Republicans in her district. "I think it helped a lot," she told me. "It's one thing to be the right candidate for the district and another to be the right candidate at the right time. There's no question that this was a district that was ready for change."

"We've got to be pure as the driven snow," says former GOP Governor Jim Edgar. "That's always been one of our issues: running against the Democrats, running against the Chicago machine. When the Republicans lost that edge, that hurt us. We've got to get that back. We can't be perceived as a party that's made up of crooks, or we're just not going to win."

It is here, in the dregs of corruption and ethical violations, that there are some lessons for Democrats outside of Illinois. "You go back to 1993—the party that has spoken to the agenda of change and reform is the party that's more successful," says Fifth District Congressman Rahm Emanuel, who represents much of Chicago's North Side. Running as a reformer against a corrupt establishment is one of the oldest and most successful narratives in American politics. It also happens to be right on the merits; so in this case, to quote former Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley, good politics is good government.

Nobody should know this better than the Congressional Republicans who came to power in 1994 in the wake of a series of House scandals that had been ably hyped by Newt Gingrich as part of what he called an "ethics offensive." The Contract With America, which began with a promise to "restore accountability to Congress [and] to end its cycle of scandal and disgrace," was as much about shaking up the ossified Democratic leadership (term limits, stricter rules on gifts from lobbyists) as it was about substantive policies.

But as movement conservative Quin Hillyer lamented recently in *The New Republic Online*, "ten years into the GOP revolution that Gingrich started, the ethics of Congressional Republicans can only be described as, well, offensive." From rolling back limits on gifts from lobbyists, to making it more difficult for the ethics subcommittee to initiate investigations, to closing the legislative process off from public scrutiny, the GOP leadership is well on its way to outdoing even the most corrupt members of the old House Democratic establishment. In fact, put up against the accusations of Tom DeLay's illegal fundraising and lobbyist-sponsored junkets, or the reported attempt to bribe Republican Congressman Nick Smith of Michigan to vote for the Medicare boondoggle with promises of cash for his son's campaign, the transgressions of Chicago legend Dan Rostenkowski, the longtime baron of the House

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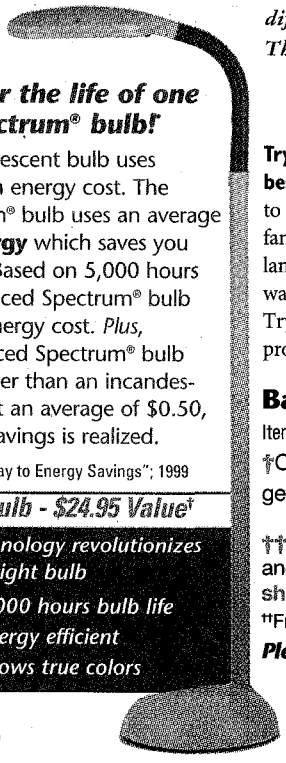

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Ways and Means Committee who served seventeen months in federal prison for mail fraud, look positively quaint.

Says Ninth District Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, who represents the far North Side and northern suburbs, "People may believe, unless we forcefully make the case, that this kind of fooling around with the rules, this kind of shutting down of democracy in a heavy-handed if not criminal way—that that's kind of business as usual among politicians."

Schakowsky's right. Democrats do have to make the case forcefully. In Illinois the US Attorney's office played a key role in doggedly pursuing GOP corruption, and if Democrats learned anything from the Clinton years, it's the power of an officially sanctioned investigation to turn smoke into fire. But with the GOP currently controlling both houses and barring any ethics investigations that don't have majority support, Democrats will have to rely on the press and public outrage. Of late, it seems Congressional Democrats have been catching on to this, taking steps to move the ball forward on the scandals that the blogosphere has worked feverishly to call attention to, pushing for a floor vote to reinstate revoked ethics rules, and issuing a 147-page report about the "death of deliberative democracy" under the GOP's reign.

The pushback over the DeLay amendment, in which House Republicans first voted to change their rules so DeLay could retain his leadership position even if indicted and then reversed themselves after an outcry from Democrats, was a high point. (Of course, a few weeks later the GOP leadership purged three Republican committee members, including chairman Joel Hefley, who had opposed the DeLay amendment.)

But it's still not enough. Congressional Democrats should take a page out of Gingrich's and Blagojevich's books and propose comprehensive ethics reform. They should talk about the "corrupt Republicans" and "restoring transparency and integrity" at every turn. They should use DeLay's mounting ignominy to tar fellow Republicans who benefit from his fundraising and clout. In short, they should make Republican scandal and Democratic reform one of the central narratives of their opposition over the next two years. "Newt Gingrich came to power because of an ethics scandal," says Obama's state political director, Dan Shomon. "Rod Blagojevich got elected partly because of scandal. You can defeat an incumbent if you can catch his or her hand in the cookie jar." ■

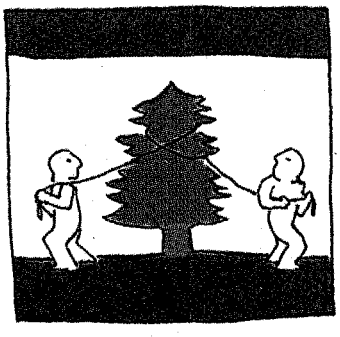
THE RETREAT FROM LEBANON THREATENS THE VERY SURVIVAL OF THE BAATHIST REGIME.

The Syrian Dilemma

DAVID HIRST

Damascus

One Arab Nation With an Eternal Mission: Baath Party, Smasher of Artificial Frontiers. Till not so long ago, this was the slogan emblazoned across a triumphal archway under which travelers passed at the Lebanese-Syrian frontier. It was a relic of that turbulent, post-independence era when revolutionary nationalist movements, bent on restoring the "Arab nation" to its former greatness, took power in various countries. No country was more central to this than Syria, the "beating heart" of Arabism, and no movement more than Syria's progeny, the Baath, or Renaissance, Party.



CAITLIN DOVER

Since the 1950s Syria has embarked on countless, ultimately abortive unionist projects with other Arab states. None of them, oddly, involved the country that was closest to it—not at least until, in 1976, its army crossed the most "artificial" of its colonially drawn borders and, in what it portrayed as its pan-Arab duty, sought to rescue Lebanon from the civil war into which it had fallen. Thus began the overlordship, the far-reaching political, economic and institutional penetration of one Arab country by another, in which everyone—America, Israel, the Arabs—eventually acquiesced. Yet still the frontier post, odious symbol of Arab fragmentation, remained obstinately there; and eventually the decaying archway that supposedly heralded its disappearance disappeared itself, giving way to a new complex of immigration buildings and a duty-free emporium adorned not with unionist slogans but with ads for Dunkin' Donuts.

When, soon after the February assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri, widely assumed to have been carried out by Syrian agents, I crossed that frontier, it had become more than just a standing reproach to Arabism; it was symbolic not merely of the Arabs' failure to unite but of the tearing asunder of the little degree to which they had. Normally teeming, it was almost deserted. Lebanese were uneasy about going to Syria. Syrians were positively fearful of going to Lebanon, where they have been insulted and assaulted, their residences attacked, a reported thirty of them murdered.

If assassinations sometimes accelerate history, Hariri's brutal, spectacular, but popularly unifying demise was surely one of them. At a stroke it unleashed, in a great and very public torrent, all the anti-Syrian sentiments that had been surreptitiously building over the years.

Ever-growing street demonstrations, unprecedented in modern Arab history, culminated in one on March 14 that drew per-

David Hirst, a longtime Middle East correspondent for the Guardian, *is the author of* The Gun and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East *(Nation Books).*

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haps a million people, a quarter of the population, to Beirut's Martyrs' Square. Not just the numbers were impressive; so was their composition. In this multi-confessional country, it was, if anything, a triumph over confessionalism. The people by and large stood in one trench, their Syrian-controlled rulers in another; that, not confessional antagonism, was now the fault line principally defining the course of events. True, one sect, the Shiites, was heavily underrepresented, and the Shiite resistance movement Hezbollah had earlier staged a huge—yet smaller, more regimented, essentially single-sect and tactically motivated—"pro-Syrian" rally of its own. No less true, however, the Sunni Muslim community now threw its full weight behind the hitherto mainly Christian and Druse opposition, the significance of that being that it was traditionally Sunnis, not Shiites, who chiefly stood for Lebanon's pan-Arab nationalist identity and looked to Syria to sustain them. But at bottom it was Lebanon's silent majority—of all classes, sects and stations—who had their say on March 14. And at bottom what they said was: Give us our independence, dignity and freedom back again.

For the Baathists it was surely the death throes of One Arab Nation. Here they were, its historic standard-bearers, being reviled and driven back across that "artificial" frontier from the one Arab state where they had had the means and opportunity, in their fashion, to implement it. But history may one day judge it to have marked the birth of something new. As Lebanese columnist Samir Kassir put it: "The Arab nationalist cause has shrunk into the single aim of getting rid of the regimes of terrorism and coups, and regaining the people's freedom as a prelude to the new Arab renaissance. It buries the lie that despotic systems can be the shield of nationalism. Beirut has become the 'beating heart' of a new Arab nationalism."

In its basic impulses, this was indeed a strictly Arab, and inter-Arab, affair. But where does it fit into the great debate about the degree to which America is contributing to the winds of change in the region? Certainly, at least, George W. Bush could rejoice at this timely convergence of "people power"—massive, authentic, homegrown—with his global crusade for "freedom and democracy." So could his Administration's neoconservative hawks, for whom, soulmates of Israel's Likud, the pan-Arab nationalism of the Baath is the very antithesis of Zionism and its inherent drive to keep the "Arab Nation" fragmented, weak and doomed, in the end, to make peace with Israel on Likudnik terms. The neocons have long targeted Syria as a prime candidate in their grand design for regime change throughout the region, an objective that Congress's latest "Lebanon and Syria Liberation" bill endorses in all but name. And compared with that other candidate for regime change, Iran, Syria is a temptingly "low-hanging fruit," as some in Washington put it, and probably harvestable by merely political, not military, means. No wonder Bush so smartly joined the Lebanese opposition in almost daily and peremptory demands for full and immediate withdrawal of Syrian troops and intelligence services.

This sudden and overwhelming confluence of the local and the international, the spontaneous and the long-envisaged, has shaken the Baathist regime, so much so that some in Damascus now feel that its end is only a matter of time. "Total defeat in

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Lebanon," said leading dissident Michel Kilo, "will mean defeat at home."

To be sure, Syria is not defeated yet. Even as its forces redeploy and some withdraw altogether, it is still sustaining Lebanon's president, Emile Lahoud, and his puppet administration without them. So far Hezbollah, now agonizingly torn between its pan-Arab, jihadist imperatives and increasingly irreconcilable Lebanese ones, remains potently, if very uncomfortably, at Syria's service. And soon after Syrian secret police departed Beirut, car bombs began to go off in Christian neighborhoods. Were these, Lebanese asked, Syria's opening shots in the manufacture of a scenario long hinted at? Namely, that if the world pushes Syria to leave Lebanon, the world will soon come begging it to return as Lebanon, sliding back into civil war, begins to look like another Iraq, another paradise for militants and terrorists of all kinds.

That remains to be seen. But even without such desperate expedients, Syria's extraordinary resolve to keep its faltering grip on Lebanon and the brutally coercive methods it has used are already evidence enough of how vitally important it deems Lebanon to be. "Along with the command economy and the apparatus of repression," said Louai Hussein, a Syrian commentator, "control of Lebanon was one of three main pillars on which [the late] President Hafez al-Assad built his power and prestige." In fact, Syria's rulers always instinctively strive for greater regional influence than the resources of Syria alone can command. They exploit their regional "cards" in a continuous quest to advance their interests—which now boil down to securing their mere survival in the new, US-dominated Middle East order. Iraq is such a card, hence the repeated recriminations over what Syria is, or perhaps isn't, doing to help the anti-American insurgency there. Palestine is another, hence persistent American charges that Syria is "unhelpful" to the peace process, or Israeli ones that Palestinian suicide bombers get their orders from Damascus.

In a long-eroding regional hand, Lebanon, and its complete and exclusive hegemony there, is Syria's only remaining trump. It is Syria's front line, its arena of proxy war, its substitute for the military confrontation with Israel that—given its vast military inferiority—it could never risk directly from its own territory. Hezbollah is the formidable instrument of this proxy war; quiescent at the moment, it is ready and waiting to offer what, in some great showdown, Iran or Syria might require of it: its jihadist zeal, its guerrilla prowess and, according to Israel, the thousands of upgraded long-range missiles it could rain down on Israeli cities.

Economically, Lebanon is Syria's milch cow, such a cornucopia of extortion, racketeering and diversion of public funds that the distribution of the spoils—authoritatively put at about a billion dollars a year—among the Baathist oligarchy is said to be a factor in the stability of the regime. Lebanon is also the place where up to a million ordinary Syrians, facing at least 20 percent (and rising) unemployment in their own country, find illicit, low-paid work, or did so until, after Hariri's murder, they started fleeing in sizable, if unknown, numbers.

Perhaps even more dangerous to Syrian Baathism than the loss of this priceless Lebanese asset would be the potential domino effect inside Syria of the Lebanese "people power" that chiefly brought it about. First there were elections in Iraq and Palestine, which, however flawed, showed Syrians the shaming fact that Arabs enjoy more electoral choice if they are occupied than if they are sovereign. Then came this huge, unscheduled outbreak of popular self-assertion in a country where an Arab sister-state, not an Israeli or American occupier, is in charge.

And could any Syrians fail to grasp that what the Lebanese were rising up against was not (despite some ugly, chauvinist side effects) Syria itself but the extension, on Lebanese soil, of what they themselves more drastically endure at home? That is to say, the oppressions of a once-revolutionary new order that has long since betrayed its three great founding principles, pan-Arab unity, freedom and socialism. Like the now-defunct Soviet-style, single-party "people's republics" on which it was largely modeled, this Baathist order has lost all true legitimacy, sunk as it is in the most cancerous corruption, minority sectarian rule, intellectual and technical backwardness, bureaucratic ossification, abuse of law and human rights, imperviousness to dissent or criticism.

The Baathist order has lost all legitimacy, sunk as it is in the most cancerous corruption and abuse of law and human rights.

Syrians also know that those who brought the Syrian presence in Lebanon to its disastrous pass are the same people—the so-called "old guard," shadowy power centers in the army and intelligence services—who have brought fear to their own lives these past forty years, as well as blocked all reform and democratization. It is no surprise that Syria's dissident intelligentsia identify entirely with Lebanon's democratic uprising; call, like it, for full Syrian withdrawal; and use the international publicity the uprising has brought to dramatize their own campaign for human rights and civil liberties, a campaign whose most visible form is small snap demonstrations, outside courts or prisons, whenever opportunity arises.

But the Syrians aren't going to rise up like the Lebanese—not yet, anyway. Long repressed, they don't have the organized opposition or the strong residue of democratic traditions that the "Syrianization" of Lebanon never snuffed out. And the barrier of fear, always much higher than in Lebanon, remains strongly in place. "Hariri's murder," said a dissident who had no doubt about its authorship, "was a savage warning to us as much as to the Lebanese." Yet weak though it may be, and still confined largely to the intelligentsia, small political groups and human rights activists, the opposition is certainly gaining ground on a regime that is in little better shape itself, rattled and insecure as it is behind the despot's characteristic facade of lofty self-confidence, loyalist street demonstrations and the portrayal of obvious reverses as great achievements in the onward people's march.

Syrians find it hard to imagine that with Lebanon and all the domestic, regional and international pressures it has unleashed, President Bashar al-Assad doesn't realize he must do something—and do it decisively—to guard his regime, or even his country, against the gathering perils. But in this aptly dubbed

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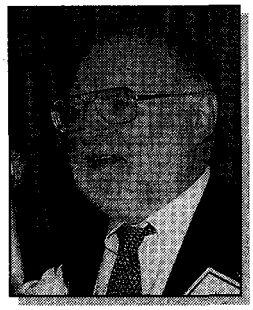

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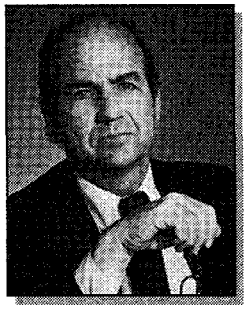

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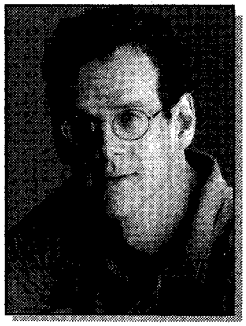

David Cole
Nation Legal Affairs Correspondent and Georgetown Law Professor

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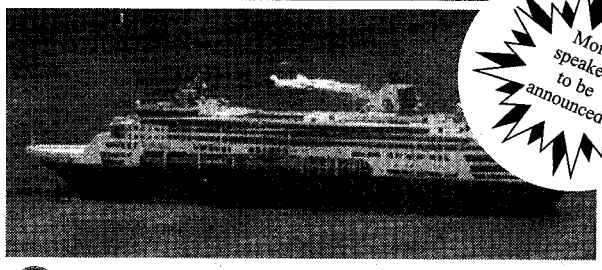
Nov. 13	Sun	Day at Sea		
Nov. 14	Mon	Cabo San Lucas, Mexico	8:00 AM	4:00 PM
Nov. 15	Tue	Mazatlán, Mexico	8:00 AM	6:00 PM
Nov. 16	Wed	Puerto Vallarta, Mexico	8:00 AM	10:00 PM
Nov. 17	Thu	Day at Sea		
Nov. 18	Fri	Day at Sea		
Nov. 19	Sat	San Diego, CA	8:00 AM	



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"dictatorship without a dictator," has he the means, or the will? Whereas his late father, Hafez, was absolute master of what he had built, Bashar often seems more like its prisoner, forever torn between two alternative courses, reform or reaction, liberalization or repression, reaching out to the people as his source of authority or falling back on his old guard. Thus, on coming to power a few years ago, he initiated the "Damascus Spring," only to rein it in when, timid though it was, he thought it was going too far.

Such alternatives now confront him more starkly than ever. He can either make a clean break with Lebanon, purge the old guard, open wide the doors to domestic reform and appease America and the world; or he can cling to Lebanon by any means, bow to the old guard, revert to full-scale repression and defy the world. What he will probably try to do is essentially what he always has done: make no clear choice, temporize, hope that something turns up. But with his authority steadily fraying, both within his apparatus and in the country at large, how long can it be before someone, somewhere, decides it is time to rescue the regime—or overthrow it? These are the kinds of questions now being asked by Syrians, whose yearning for change is tempered only by fear of the way—liable to be tumultuous at best, civil war at worst—it might come about, and what would come after.

Not the least of the great imponderables is what America's role and objectives might be. The homily that a typical liberal, secular-modernist dissident might address to President Bush would go something like this:

> In principle we like your "freedom and democracy" and think that what you've been doing in the Middle East has, by accident or design, given a push in that direction. But the bad things your country does still so far outweigh the potentially good that the last thing reformists like us need is to be identified with you, especially if you or Israel physically attack us. For we know that whatever you do it is Israel's wishes, not ours, that concern you. And we fear that you really do take seriously your Israeli friend Natan Sharansky—the right-wing fanatic who inspires your speeches—and his preposterous theory that only when Arabs are democratic will they be ready for peace with Israel. No, we want democracy because it will serve our national interest far better than a despotic regime whose nationalism is just a cover to suppress democracy. And so long as your policies remain what they are, our national interest will be to oppose them. But in any case, if one day we do have free elections here, it won't be the likes of us who win them but—thanks largely to you—the Islamists. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

grant the case is arguable. His criticism about my use of the "smoking gun" quote, however, seems stronger than the rest of his complaint, and for that I do apologize. Still, though you can't blame a writer for a headline, the use of IT IS WATERGATE above his article was clearly designed to imply some sort of moral or political equivalence between CBS's actions and those of Richard Nixon. And that, I continue to maintain, is just silly. ERIC ALTERMAN

LETTERS BY GENDER

Silver Spring, Md.

■ Re Katha Pollitt's "Invisible Women" ["Subject to Debate," April 4]: Last fall I tabulated by gender the letters to the editor in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Times*—529 letters over nineteen days. The percentages of writers, by gender: 73 percent by men, 27 percent by women. The breakdown for women by paper was: *New York Times*, 31 percent; *Washington Post*, 26 percent; *Washington Times*, 15 percent. The study was hardly scientific, but it showed that the number of letters by women was related to how liberal the paper is.

EDD DOERR

ITALY: ANTIWAR, NOT ANTI-AMERICAN

Washington, DC

■ We were surprised to read Lucia Annunziata's "Anger in Italy" [April 4]. It claims that the Italian left (and for that matter the right) has used anti-Americanism to cover its inadequacies in the case of the killing of the Italian intelligence officer traveling with journalist Giuliana Sgrena in Iraq. We disagree for two reasons. First, the widespread anger at this episode among the majority of Italians is a sign of longstanding disagreement with the occupation of Iraq, with the Berlusconi government's involvement of the Italian military in that occupation and with the killing of innocents there daily. The left is rightly giving voice to these antiwar feelings, a position not to be confused with anti-Americanism.

Second, this killing caused much indignation because it was associated with the US military's accidental killing of civilians in northern Italy, when a US military jet severed a cable at a ski resort, but no justice was meted out. The identification of antiwar positions of the left with anti-Americanism is wrong: It does not serve the cause of peace and aids the neocons' ideological campaign (did anyone read their blogs against Sgrena and the peace movement in the days following the incident?).

TIZIANA TAMBORRINI, EMANUELE BALDACCI

NO HOMAGE TO CATALONIA

Belmont, Calif.

■ While Spaniards struggle to recover the history of their civil war and Franco repression ["Letter From Spain," March 28], the role of Americans in that conflict has been remarkably preserved as the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA), now part of New York University's Tamiment Library. When the same cold warriors who supported Spain's dictatorship ignored the historical preservation of the antifascist Lincoln Brigade (one major New York library allegedly destroyed such material), the US veterans took the initiative to save their history. The ALBA collection is an immense treasure, including papers, publications, graphics, oral histories and microfilm of material stored in Moscow. ALBA also creates cultural events to keep alive the legacy of the American volunteers in the Spanish Civil War. Next year look for the exhibition "New York and the Spanish Civil War." PETER N. CARROLL

Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives

WORTH 1,000 WORDS

Medford, Mass.

■ I want to express my appreciation for the artists—Peter O. Zierlein, Caitlin Dover, Ryan Inzana et al.—whose images regularly illustrate *Nation* articles. They're always smart, amusing and punchy and show a real understanding of the written piece. They are a crucial element of *The Nation*'s unique format. CARL MARTIN

MURDERERS & MURDEREES

■ In Lee Siegel's April 11 "The Imagination of Disaster," killers and victims were reversed in Ian McEwan's *The Comfort of Strangers*. The murderers are the decadent Venetian husband and wife; their victim, the husband in the deceptively innocent English couple.

In Michael T. Klare's April 25 "Imperial Reach," Grafenwöhr training area is not in the former East Germany. It's in western Germany, about forty miles from the old border.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Another Country

MELINE TOUMANI

LIPSTICK JIHAD: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran.
By Azadeh Moaveni.
PublicAffairs. 249 pp. $25.

IN THE ROSE GARDEN OF THE MARTYRS: A Memoir of Iran.
By Christopher de Bellaigue.
HarperCollins. 283 pp. $26.95.

It's difficult to identify the exact moment when the shift occurred, but it must have been sometime after President Bush debuted the phrase "axis of evil" in his January 2002 State of the Union address, and sometime before Azar Nafisi's memoir, *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, landed on the *New York Times* bestseller list two years later. From the mouths of politicians, broadcasters and members of book clubs across America, Iran no longer sounded like the past-tense conjugation of a verb for fast movement. "Eye-ran" had become "Ee-rawn." This refinement of pronunciation, tentative at first, has grown exultant. Recently a correspondent for National Public Radio emphasized the long "a" so earnestly it sounded like "Ee-rone."

What made this development possible was, first of all, the 1997 election of President Khatami, which opened an era of reform; newspapers reported that veils were slipping, young people were partying and the Internet was working its subversive magic. Around the same time, galleries in New York and Los Angeles showcased work by Iranian artists, and Iranian films became wildly trendy (since 1997, when Abbas Kiarostami's *Taste of Cherry* won the Palme d'Or, seven films from Iran have won prizes at Cannes). Through some alchemy of politics, optimism and the vagaries of pop culture, Iran chic was born.

Even when the reformist revolution did not arrive as hoped, the consecutive tragedies of 9/11 and the war in Iraq kept Iran in the spotlight. In 2003 Shirin Ebadi, an Iranian human rights lawyer, won the Nobel Peace Prize, and a few months later a massive earthquake struck the Iranian city of Bam. The very next month, Iran achieved the ultimate form of mainstream recognition in the United States: three Academy Award nominations (for *House of Sand and Fog*, a drama about an exiled Iranian family struggling in California). Meanwhile, Iran's last empress, Farah Pahlavi, published her recollections in *An Enduring Love*. The Iranian-French illustrator Marjane Satrapi published a second volume of her comic book memoir, *Persepolis*, to great acclaim. Another memoir, *Journey From the Land of No*, by Iranian-Jewish emigré Roya Hakakian, received ample praise. And Nafisi's book jumped from hand to hand; now at week sixty-two on the bestseller list, it shows no signs of slowing down.

For Iranians who came to the United States during the 1979 revolution, America's Iran fascination can be a bit disorienting.

To those of us who arrived in the United States from Iran during the 1979 revolution, just in time to unpack our bags, pour a cup of tea, turn on the television and find out that our countrymen had taken fifty-two Americans hostage, all of this recognition has felt a bit disorienting. My family had moved from Tehran a year before the hostage crisis, to a quiet mountain town in New Jersey that used to be a popular summer getaway for middle-class New Yorkers. Most neighbors were welcoming. It took a while before they made the connection between Eye-ran and the polite new family at 16 Country Lane, and in any case, my parents had the odd habit of answering "We're European" to the question "Where are you from?" One day, in 1980, my father was chatting with a neighbor on our front lawn when the conversation turned to current events. "What do you say we just bomb the hell out of these assholes?" the man asked. Though my family had been

Meline Toumani is a writer living in Brooklyn. She contributes frequently to the New York Times.

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in Iran for generations, we are Armenian, and so perhaps a bit more "European" in appearance; the neighbor had no idea he was talking about the city where my father's mother and sister still lived. My father said nothing. (The unwitting fellow, who became a dear friend, returned later that day with two beers and an apology.)

My older sister's peers were no less energized by the hostage crisis; in fourth grade they called her Ayatollah Toumani, a taunt whose political precocity might have been impressive had it not been so hateful. (One can only imagine how many immigrant children in America have lately endured nicknames like Osama or Saddam—or how many bear the inconvenience of actually having those names.)

The lesson from these experiences was clear: Better not talk too much about Iran. But what were the consequences? I asked myself this question one night a few months ago, while sitting in a hall in Flushing, Queens, with several hundred Iranian-Americans. We were there to welcome Farah Pahlavi, who fled the country with her husband, the Shah, in January 1979, just before Khomeini returned and took over. She couldn't have hoped for a better reception. The event was part gospel meeting call-and-response, part "Next year in Tehran," merging the exiled Queen's hope of return with that of her listeners.

The audience's warm embrace of the Queen contrasts markedly, of course, with the official story in Iran about the decades leading up to the Pahlavis' fall from grace. According to this narrative, the Shah's corrupt and tyrannical regime hoarded money and power, squandered public resources on private indulgence, tortured and killed critics, and planted agents from the Savak (Iran's secret service) throughout Iranian society, stifling even the pettiest expressions of dissent. Like any account of the past, this history comes in some variations, but the basic outline is clear: Popular discontent with the Shah eventually boiled over into revolution.

But as I watched the audience members dab their eyes and clutch one another's arms at Queen Farah's entrance, I wondered about the difference between history and memory—and remembered that what was for some Iranians a reign of terror was, for others, a lost paradise. The assembled were mostly Long Island Iranians, members of what one might call the '78 generation: those who came just before, during or immediately after the revolution. Above the stage hung a pre-revolution flag: green, white and red, with a lion and sun in the center.

Farah talked about life with her husband ("a dream"), about her new book ("for my people") and, finally, about the pain of twenty-six years in exile. Everybody in the room, whether genuine royalty or shoeshiner to the Shah, had experienced the same separation, and tears flowed freely as the Queen spoke. The only thing worse than exile, she said, was to see the image that the rest of the world now has of Iran. "This is even harder to bear than our own life." When she confessed her hope that one day Iranian-American youth could return and serve their country, the audience let loose a pent-up gale of "*Enshallah!*"—God willing—and somebody cried out, "You will do it, Your Majesty!"

Once considered a burden, exile has come into vogue for supposedly embodying the qualities that define the postmodern experience.

A spectator asked Farah how history would judge His Majesty. Solemnly, she replied that it already had, and the judgment was not kind. But she added that every time she meets a compatriot—even twenty-five years after the Shah's death—they say to her, "*Khoda biamorzeh*," may God bless his soul. Her voice cracked, and the audience applauded for twenty seconds.

Before the party was over, a master of ceremonies stood up and said there was a problem. To kick off the evening, the band had played a song—Iran's pre-revolution national anthem—but no one had recognized it because it was a "modern arrangement"; nobody had stood up. Laughing awkwardly, the Queen admitted that she herself hadn't recognized the tune until halfway through. To remedy the misstep, the MC took the microphone and led the entire room in a rousing, a cappella take two of their old anthem. As it ended, the audience clapped a steady beat and chanted in unison, "*Javid Shah*"—"Long live the King."

It would be easy—and misleading—to assume that the Queen's admirers at this unlikely affair were simply devout royalists displaced by the revolution. It's true that most came from the educated middle class; that's how they got out when they did. But these were nonetheless typical, nonpolitical émigrés who remembered (or imagined, depending on their age) the Pahlavi years—their Iran—with fondness.

In her essay "The New Nomads," the Polish-born writer Eva Hoffman observes that while exile used to be considered a difficult condition, it has lately come into vogue, at least among those who study it, for supposedly embodying the qualities that define the postmodern experience: fragmented identity, dislocation and uncertainty. Exile, she writes, has become "sexy, glamorous, interesting." If this is true, it helps explain why so many memoirs by Iranian exiles have found their way into print lately. But Hoffman argues that while exiles indeed possess "a stark sense of biographical drama," the postmodern celebration of exile risks underestimating the real emotional and psychological burden of living between two worlds.

At the heart of this burden lies a sort of bipolar personal narrative; the story has a neat division, a before and an after, where the homeland represents an asymptote of fulfillment, a sustaining force in the story. For Iranians who came to America during the revolution and hostage crisis, keeping up with Iran was anything but chic; the shocking changes taking place there all but closed the chapter on pre-revolution Iran. Access—emotional as well as actual—was cut off, and memories of home were frozen in time. Exile means that the place you come from becomes unreal as it becomes untouchable; the exile's solace is the fantasy that he creates from these conditions.

But exile, however traumatic, can come with an expiration date—and in this case, the dawn of Iran chic is it. While Iranians who fled during the revolution can never re-create the world they knew, most can now travel with relative ease between the United States and Iran, something few did until recent years. They return with videos and photographs, and journalists provide accounts of changes on the ground. As Iran becomes a bit more accessible—indeed, as it pops up everywhere one looks—it turns out that nostalgia cannot stand up to reality. These days, when friends and family make the trip, there's a pathos to it, not because of the head scarves or the billboards covered with bloody martyrs, nor even because of the emotional reunion with relatives who never got to leave. The real pain of returning is the pain of concluding the fantasy and confronting the real Iran, which is neither as lovely nor as horrific as it is cast in either chapter of the before-and-after story. Hoffman describes this realization as "the loss of the very sense of loss."

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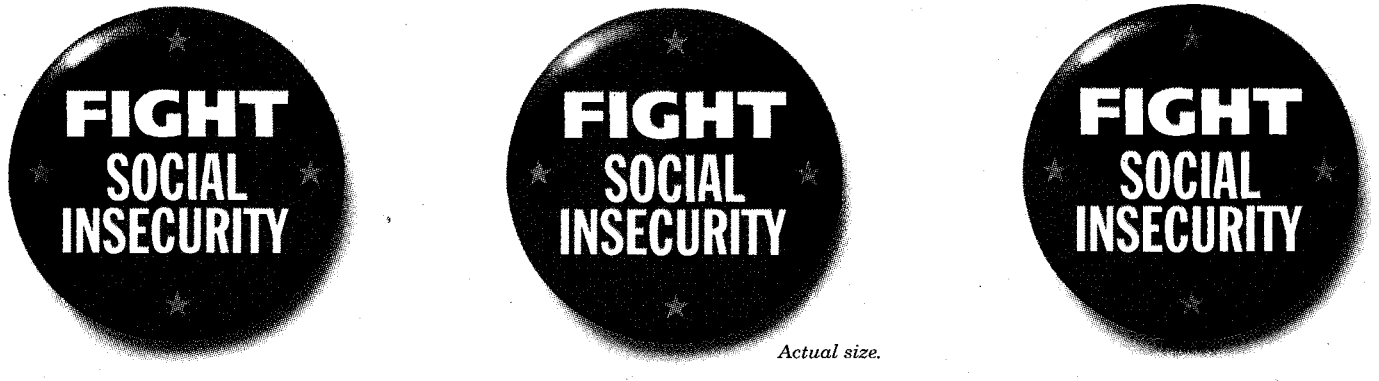

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Azadeh Moaveni, a 28-year-old Iranian-American journalist, explores the limits of nostalgia in *Lipstick Jihad*, the most recent of the Iran memoirs. Moaveni grew up in California, but after college she went to Iran to cover the 1999 student protests. In 2000 she returned as a stringer for *Time*, and was the only American journalist allowed to set up shop in the country during a period of serious upheaval. Her project in *Lipstick Jihad* is as much personal as political, recounting her efforts to find satisfaction in being Iranian, and to achieve a sense of belonging that eluded her in California. This wasn't easy, since she found herself hating some things about the new Iran. "If you are a nostalgic lover of Iran," an Iranian friend tells her, "you love your own remembrance of the past, the passions in your own life that are intertwined with Iran. If you love Iran realistically, you do so *despite* its flaws, because an affection that can't look its object in the face is a selfish one."

Heeding this advice, Moaveni tries to manage the ambivalence that results when the bipolar structure of exile falls apart—what to do when, as Hoffman puts it, paradise turns out to be "an ordinary garden, needing weeding, tilling, and watering." The details of Moaveni's homecoming are poignant: an elderly relative prepares *sholehzard*, a rice pudding scented with rose water and saffron, on which Moaveni's name is spelled out in cinnamon and almonds; the neighborhood fruit vendor greets her with exaggerated glee at her return. The author's capacity to appreciate these moments and yet look critically at political and social problems in the country is a kind of integration of nostalgia and reality that sets her story apart from what could have been a predictable homecoming tale.

Yet the balance is not entirely harmonious. As her stay in Iran wears on, her curiosity turns into exasperation, and her criticisms of the regime become increasingly intemperate. "It was impossible to respect the Islamic Republic," she declares, referring to mullahs as "pariahs, an untouchable class" who are ignored on the street by cabdrivers, and as "slatternly, corrupt, unworldly clerics, with village accents and scant ambitions" who "held meetings on the floor, sat slouched before the cameras, and mumbled about 'foreign enemies.'" Moaveni may be right—she walks us through enough harrowing security interviews, street protests and raids that it's clear she's no armchair quarterback of Iranian politics. But her sweeping remarks bear the proprietary confidence of judgment that one can levy only on one's own. Could a non-Iranian get away with calling a mullah "Jabba the Hut"?

Another new memoir, *In the Rose Garden of the Martyrs*, by Christopher de Bellaigue, provides an instructive comparison. De Bellaigue, a British journalist married to an Iranian woman, lived in Tehran during the same years as Moaveni. His book is a work of reportage and contemporary history, loosely framed by de Bellaigue's fraught relationship with a former revolutionary named Mr. Zarif. Although de Bellaigue speaks Persian and, thanks to his marriage, is immersed in Iranian private life, Mr. Zarif and the other erstwhile activists de Bellaigue pursues treat him with a certain distance and suspicion. They call him Reza Ingilisi, or English Reza (Reza is the ceremonial name that his wife gave him, and that he uses whenever he senses that "Christopher" will be difficult "or even distasteful" to pronounce). Throughout his adventures, de Bellaigue's criticism of post-revolution Iran is implicit, but unlike Moaveni, whose crushing scorn coexists with a strong sense of connection to a place she'll be stuck with no matter what she writes, his observations betray the frustration of a foreigner who realizes both the journalistic and even the human obligation to suspend ultimate judgment.

To understand Iran, a quintessential insider society, you need to know your tarof*—the art of saying things you don't mean.*

One day, de Bellaigue and Mr. Zarif are talking about the condition of the country, and Mr. Zarif—a proud man—admits to the author that Iran is in a sorry state. De Bellaigue describes his own reaction:

> I'd had similar feelings. Why doesn't anything work? Why does nothing happen on time? Why is everything so crappy and falling apart? Is it useful to spend so much energy mourning a man who died more than thirteen hundred years ago? But there was a distance between myself and Iran. I would never be Iranian. (You cannot become Iranian—not spiritually. You have to be born one, like a Hindu.) But Mr Zarif was Iranian, and so these thoughts were acute, a kind of self-flagellation.

De Bellaigue's distance, then, provides a kind of reprieve, and perhaps even a measure of clarity.

So who gets to speak for Iran? Questions of authenticity are not, of course, unique to the Islamic Republic, but the high stakes of the current political climate, as well as the built-in subjectivity of exile psychology complicate these published chronicles of life in Iran today. A more basic hurdle to understanding the country is that Iran is a real insider society: a cultural quirk known as *tarof* obscures every social interaction. *Tarof* is a way of saying things you don't mean, whether offering a tenth helping of food, refusing to accept payment for a major service or responding to "see you later" with an idiom that translates to "I'll die for you." (De Bellaigue calls *tarof* "ceremonial insincerity," and remarks, "Iran is the only country I know where hypocrisy is prized as a social and commercial skill.") *Tarof* is art—not malice or trickery—and when skillfully employed it is one of the most charming customs in Iranian social life. But it is an elaborate, nonlinear form of communication that can tire even lifelong practitioners with its hall-of-mirrors obfuscation. You can't just land in Tehran with a map and a phrase book and figure the place out.

And yet, the potential consequence of this loophole of identity politics, where the native's wisdom is often held up as unimpeachable, can be equally worrisome—especially when Washington phones for advice. For the past few years, cohorts of Iranian exiles have worked closely with neoconservatives in Washington on the possibility of regime change in Iran. In Los Angeles, émigrés broadcast satellite television programs encouraging (and sometimes organizing) protests on the streets of Tehran. Some exiles have pipe dreams of reinstating the royalty, while others envision a secular, constitutional democracy in their lost homeland. Their views, informed by real-life experience with Iranian society, are an important part of the conversation. But perhaps exile also lends itself to a unique form of extremism, a kind of defensive reaction to the psychological burden of having been ejected from a place, a way of managing the sting of reality against the sweetness of nostalgia that no longer holds.

The exiled writer thus faces an additional crisis of loyalty: how to be rigorous in one's political observations of Iran and true to one's own experience in the telling, even if one's testimony risks being presented as evidence in a distinctly nonliterary forum, such as a campaign to wage sanctions or war. The authors Azar Nafisi,

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Marjane Satrapi and Roya Hakakian each lived through the revolution, so they take this risk when, in their memoirs, they depict the horrors of that chapter in Iran's recent history. Nafisi, a lecturer at Johns Hopkins University's Nitze School of Advanced International Studies who has advised US policy-makers on Iran, told the *New York Times* last year that some Iranians criticized her "for washing our dirty laundry in front of the enemy." For her part, Moaveni concludes *Lipstick Jihad* with a firm clarification: For all their complaints, Iranians, in her view, do not need or want US intervention.

The "dirty laundry" problem calls to mind another story about Iran that outraged Iranian-Americans. In 1991 MGM produced *Not Without My Daughter*, a film that infuriated Iranian-Americans with its ugly portrayal of Iranian family life. Sally Field played an American woman whose Iranian husband whisks her away to Iran for a holiday. Upon arrival, he turns abusive and announces they are not leaving. Field's character undertakes a sensational escape through the mountains with her child, and finds salvation at the US Embassy in Turkey. The film arrived in theaters at a moment when there was little popular attention paid to Iran in the United States, so the combined force of stereotyping and Hollywood influence made it a symbol, for Iranian-Americans, of the extent to which Iran was misunderstood. If there was even a trace of truth in the film's portrayal of gender relations and judicial absurdity (after all, it was based on a true story), we rejected this in favor of prideful defensiveness. If any single cultural product plunged Iranian-Americans deeper into the protective hold of nostalgia, it was *Not Without My Daughter*.

I remember distinctly the feeling that filled our family station wagon as we drove home from viewing that movie so many years ago; something had been corrupted. It was an unexpected and painful rejection from the country we'd done so well at fitting into. That's why I was surprised to find myself delighted when I turned a page in *Lipstick Jihad* and discovered the final chapter heading: "Not Without My Mimosa." In one line, Moaveni takes the story back. At the end of her book, she is not debating how to get back to the United States, like Sally Field was in the film; she is merely wondering which of her New York City lifestyle choices she could stand to sacrifice if she were to stay in Iran. In a way, Moaveni's combination of irreverence and introspection is what makes her sound uniquely American. And yet as I read her cutting remarks and laughed out loud, I wondered whether I'd bristle at reading the same remarks from a non-Iranian. Probably. And do non-Iranians think Moaveni's book is funny? On a recent evening, the author read from *Lipstick Jihad* at a Barnes & Noble in Manhattan, and the crowd's response suggested that they did not. She ridiculed the sexual exploits of young Iranians, called Ramadan "one long rehab program" and described walking alongside her defiantly unveiled aunt as equivalent to accompanying a topless woman—a "head-breast." Although the room was packed, awkward silence came where giggles were due. And I wondered if America was ready, yet, to laugh at the Islamic Republic. Iran chic is one thing—a kind of sincere curiosity extended to compensate for ignorance or fear. But mockery, the kind we freely practice toward our good friends the French, the British and of course the Canadians, is a stage in our diplomatic relations with Iran that lies far off in the future. ■

Before the Law

NEVE GORDON

COURTING CONFLICT: The Israeli Military Court System in the West Bank and Gaza.
By Lisa Hajjar. California. 335 pp. $24.95.

An Israeli Jew and a Palestinian meet in transit right after having been sentenced in court. The Palestinian asks the Jew how much time he got.

"Three years," says the Jew. "The judge was relatively lenient, though, and took into account that the guard who tried to stop me from robbing the bank didn't die from his wounds. How much time did you get?"

"Seven years for driving without my headlights on," says the Palestinian.

"Wow! That is a hefty punishment," the Jew exclaims.

"On the contrary, my judge was also lenient. He noted that if I had been caught driving without headlights during the night he would have sentenced me to fifteen years."

Black humor like this circulated in Israel during the first intifada, functioning as a coping mechanism for liberal sabras bewildered by the egregious violations their country was perpetrating against Palestinians. This particular joke alludes to the discriminatory and often absurd logic of the military court system in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, a system that is explored in depth for the first time in Lisa Hajjar's *Courting Conflict*.

Hajjar, a professor in the Law and Society Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara, argues that the military court system has been the centerpiece of Israel's controlling apparatus in the occupied territories. It has served as an extremely important component within the broader range of governing institutions and practices in which Palestinians are tracked in grids of surveillance, subjected to restrictive codes of conduct and physically immobilized through the use of closures, curfews, checkpoints, walls and prisons. During the first intifada (December 1987–93), between 20,000 and 25,000 Palestinians were arrested every year, the highest per capita incarceration rate in the world at the time. Even though arrest rates later declined, the estimated number of prosecutions since the beginning of occupation in 1967—half a million out of a population of 3.5 million—underscores the carceral nature of Israeli military rule. Thus it is not surprising that virtually all Palestinians have had some experience with the military court system, whether personally or through the arrest and prosecution of relatives, friends and neighbors.

While the bulk of Hajjar's book discusses the workings of the military courts, she begins her investigation with an analysis of the complex legal system that Israel put in place in the occupied territories, showing how this system serves as the backdrop for the courts themselves. Immediately following the 1967 war, Israel formulated a policy that rejected the applicability of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, the most important humanitarian law pertaining to the occupation of conquered territories and their civilian populations,

Neve Gordon, who teaches politics at Ben-Gurion University in Israel, is a visiting scholar in the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

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to the West Bank and Gaza. Next, it set up a legal system composed of Ottoman, British Mandatory, Jordanian and Egyptian law, and Israeli military orders. The military orders are decrees issued by military commanders that immediately become law for all Palestinians living in the area.

Over the years, military commanders have issued at least 2,500 such orders—orders that regulate every aspect of the occupied population's life, from publishing newspapers and traveling abroad to grazing sheep and using donkeys for transferring goods. The commanders were vested with powers not only to enact laws but to cancel and suspend them, which enabled them to continuously reshape the legal system in accordance with Israel's political objectives.

Hajjar, the daughter of a Finnish mother and a father of Syrian descent, conducted her research in Israel and the occupied territories primarily in the 1990s. Both Palestinian and Israeli officials often mistook her for a Jew. She spent much of her time observing trials, where she established relationships with the various parties on both sides, and came to understand what made the military courts tick. One chapter is dedicated to the judges and prosecutors, while another concentrates on defense lawyers, some of whom are motivated by a powerful conviction that the law is a crucial tool for producing justice. There is, of course, a chapter on the defendants themselves, and one on the Druse soldiers who spend their three years of military service as translators in the courts, responsible—ostensibly—for facilitating communication between Jewish-Israeli judges and prosecutors and the Palestinian defendants and their lawyers. In these chapters, Hajjar takes the reader on a journey to the courts themselves, providing her audience with a sense of the random bargaining and humiliation and the seemingly endless tension informing the judicial interactions.

There is, for example, the story of a Gazan lawyer who lost a case after a soldier testified that he had seen the attorney's client throwing stones at 9:15 AM in the Jabalya refugee camp. Several days later the same soldier appeared in court and testified against another client, reporting that he had seen the man throwing stones at 9:30 AM on the same day as the earlier case, only this time in the Rafah refugee camp. Asked by the Palestinian lawyer how long it takes to get from Jabalya to Rafah, the soldier said no less than forty-five minutes. When the lawyer then asked the judge to

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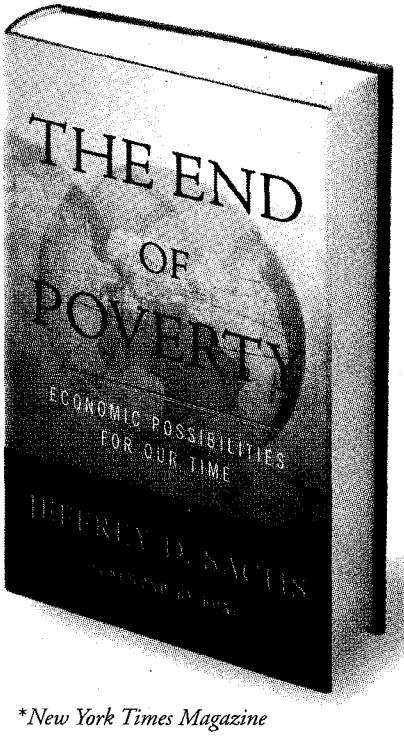

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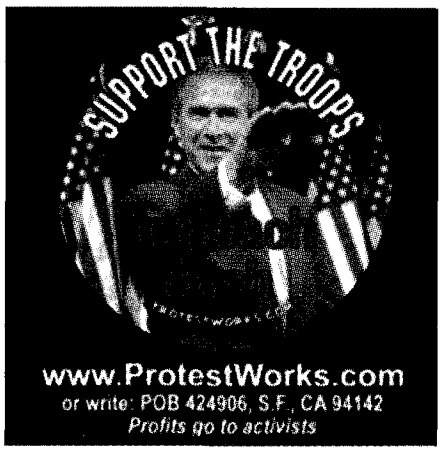

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dismiss the case because the soldier could not possibly have been in both places, the judge threw the lawyer out of court on the grounds that his line of questioning insulted the soldier. *Courting Conflict* is full of such stories, but it also underscores that not all judges rule in favor of the prosecution, and that the efforts of defense attorneys are not entirely in vain.

Hajjar's intervention is unique in the literature on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even though an enormous amount has been written on the occupation, only a few books actually analyze—rather than describe—Israel's controlling apparatus in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Among the exceptions are Naseer Aruri's *Occupation: Israel Over Palestine*, James Ron's *Frontiers and Ghettos* and *A Civilian Occupation* by Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman. *Courting Conflict* is in this select company.

From time to time, however, Hajjar's evidence belies her conclusions. She characterizes the courts not only as a site of control, oppression and subordination but also as a site of Palestinian resistance; yet her descriptions do not lend themselves to this claim. It was the Israeli prisons, rather than the courts, that engendered organized resistance. They were considered universities of sorts, where thousands of Palestinians deepened their ideological convictions, received operational training, improved their Hebrew skills and created alliances with the members of other political factions—all of which prepared the inmates for continuing their struggle once they were released.

This struggle is generally understood as a classic national conflict. Hajjar, however, seeks to recast it as a struggle over human rights—from the right to health, education and a livelihood to freedom of speech, association and movement. It is a well-intentioned effort, given how foul nationalist politics can be, but her own descriptions challenge this theoretical assertion, since the national divide figures on every other page. Although numerous rights have been invoked by Palestinians to codify their demands, at least since the 1970s, the national aspiration for statehood ultimately overshadows and informs all other rights claims.

But these flaws in no way diminish the value of the book. Especially striking is Hajjar's chapter on the Druse translators, since it reveals both the complexity and the insidious nature of Israeli rule. In order to grasp their position in court, Hajjar persuasively maintains that one must first understand the particular niche that the Druse—Arabs who practice an offshoot of Shiism established in Cairo in the eleventh century by followers of Caliph al-Hakim—occupy within the sociopolitical order of Israel/Palestine. Immediately after independence Israel began distinguishing Druse from all other non-Jewish sectors of Israeli society. By 1962 a distinct national category was officially created, and Israeli ID cards accorded the Druse their own unique identity separating them from the "Arab."

This engineered "non-Arabness" of the Druse was crucial for incorporating them into the military. "Arab Arabs" are not conscripted, since they are closely associated with the state's enemies. Thus, Druse became preferred candidates for the role of translators, since they have both bilingual skills and a "non-Arab Arab" status. Not unlike the natives who lent their services to the colonizers of old, Druse soldiers accept the state's authority and the legitimacy of its policies. Having been given a stake in the system, they tend to become complicit with Israel's oppression of Palestinians. "Palestinians are guilty," one Druse translator blithely told Hajjar. "They hate us. They throw stones. If they don't throw stones today, they will throw stones tomorrow." Like many of his fellow translators, this Druse has become a mimic man, adopting the worldview of the prosecution.

But just as the reader begins to comprehend the precarious position of the Druse translator, Hajjar adds another twist, showing that translation within the courts is less about communication between people who speak different languages and more about establishing the legitimacy of the judicial process. The Druse soldiers are not professional legal translators, and they only translate the general meaning of the proceedings so that each party will get a sense of the argument made by the other side. The defendant often does not know what is being said, since the translators frequently fail to translate the interactions between the judge and the two lawyers, leaving him (and in some cases her) completely in the dark. Imagine, for a moment, being on the stand as a defendant without knowing exactly what the prosecutor or judge is saying. Imagine being a defense lawyer and understanding only the general thrust of the prosecutor's claims.

The irony is that the lack of adequate translation is unimportant, since the legal argumentation has few if any implications

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for the defendant. The outcome is predictable, if only because some 90 to 95 percent of Palestinians who are charged with crimes are convicted and more than 97 percent of all cases in which charges are brought are determined outside the court in a plea bargain. Hajjar likens the judicial process taking place outside the courtroom to a *souk*, or marketplace, where defense lawyers bargain for a better deal like merchants. One lawyer suggests that his role is simply to beg for mercy in a merciless environment.

Despite the staggering percentage of defendants whose convictions have been determined by plea bargains outside the military courts, Hajjar shows how the courts and the complex legal system that Israel established in the territories set out to sanction the legality and morality of the occupation. This is crucial. Israel has always been wary of rejecting the law outright, attempting to project an image of an occupation informed by the rule of law and principles of justice. *Courting Conflict* thus undermines simplistic conceptions regarding the significance of the rule of law by laying bare how the judiciary institutions in the West Bank and Gaza were used to legitimize egregious human rights violations and the use of violence.

While Hajjar's book provides the necessary background for understanding the role of law and military courts in the occupied territories, the situation in the West Bank and Gaza has changed in a fundamental way in the last few years. If up until September 2000 Israel controlled the occupied inhabitants primarily through the application of the law—including, to be sure, the enforcement of draconian laws that both legalized the incarceration of thousands of political prisoners and permitted deportations, house demolitions, extended curfews and other forms of collective punishment—perhaps the most striking characteristic of the second intifada is the extensive suspension of the law. In the first intifada any suspension of the law was still considered an exception to the rule; in the second one it became the norm.

The paradigmatic example of this suspension is Israel's pervasive employment of extrajudicial executions: 469 Palestinians have been killed in the past four and a half years in this way, and even Israel concedes that 288 of them were "innocent bystanders." The fact that not one Israeli soldier has been tried for these killings and that they are in fact part of an overt policy suggests that the occupied inhabitants have been reduced to what the Italian political philosopher Giorgio Agamben has called *homo sacer*, people who can be killed without it being considered a crime. At least for these Palestinians, the military courts have become superfluous, since Israel is no longer interested in trying them.

In order to understand this dramatic change in Israel's relation to the law, it is important to examine its application to Israeli soldiers rather than to Palestinians. Since the eruption of the second intifada, 3,161 Palestinians have been killed, 636 of them minors. Moreover, of the 751 Palestinians who were killed in 2004, two-thirds had not participated in any kind of fighting. And yet the military prosecutor has opened only 104 investigations concerning unlawful shootings during the past four and a half years, and of these, twenty-eight were actually prosecuted and eighteen found guilty. One soldier who killed a 95-year-old Palestinian woman was sentenced to sixty-five days in prison.

The first intifada was very different in this respect, since most military offenses were subjected to legal scrutiny. From 1987 to 1990, Israel killed 743 Palestinians, 154 of whom were minors—fewer than it killed in 2004. The military, however, carried out an investigation of every killing and initiated a total of 1,256 investigations against soldiers who were suspected of breaching the regulations. Although the military ended up prosecuting only forty soldiers for unlawful killings, the soldiers' actions were, nonetheless, constantly investigated by the judicial authorities. Thus, if a defining feature of the first intifada was ongoing legal scrutiny, the second intifada can be characterized by the extensive withdrawal of the law. Of course, it also further unmasked the true face of power that stands behind the application of law, and laid bare the relationship between occupier and occupied.

The result of these sweeping and disturbing changes is a pervasive despair prevalent in Israel/Palestine, which is well captured in Hajjar's book despite its failure to address some of the essential features of the second intifada. This, one should keep in mind, is not how most people felt during the first intifada. Even amid the horror there was always a ray of light. This sense of hope was conveyed in the joke about Dita, the switchboard operator at the Defense Ministry.

Dita was puzzled by a man who called every morning, asking to speak with Defense Minister Ariel Sharon. Each morning she would tell him that Sharon was

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not the minister of defense, and he would reply, "Oh, thank you!" before hanging up. Finally, after three weeks, Dita asked the man, "Sir, every morning you call up and ask to speak to Mr. Sharon, and I keep telling you that he is not minister of defense. Why do you keep calling?" The response was immediate: "It's so encouraging to hear; it gives me some *naches* for the rest of the day."

The fact that Sharon is not defense minister but prime minister surely does not help those who want to take a step back, if only for a moment, and laugh at the quagmire the two peoples have sunk in. More important, though, the ruthless violence that both societies have been subjected to in the past few years has left little room for joy. It is therefore no surprise that this intifada has not produced any new jokes. ■

FILMS

The Counterfeiter

STUART KLAWANS

THE MAN WHO COPIED • SAVE THE GREEN PLANET! • FEVER PITCH

As celluloid guinea pig for the American left, I am perfectly willing to report on the effects of exposure to this month's pop hit, *Sin City*. I might even agree to conduct a *Sin City* self-experiment with Grand Theft Auto as control, in either the original or the San Andreas version. What I will not do, though, is write about *Sin City* as if all urban crime-and-sex movies were created equal. Some, gaudily laden with promotional funds, emerge into a welcoming market; whereas others, such as *The Man Who Copied* (*O Homem Que Copiava*), claw their way inch by inch toward the light.

Though it was written and directed by one of Brazil's best filmmakers, Jorge Furtado, and won a fistful of awards in its country of origin, *The Man Who Copied* has been knocking around the festival circuit since 2003, generally on the second tier. Shopworn, buzzless and in Portuguese, it now opens at the Quad Cinemas in New York on April 22 and the Sunset 5 in Los Angeles on April 29, making me worry for its future. If I'm going to write about a tale of larceny, violence, sexual predation and the cartoon aesthetic, then (without prejudice to *Sin City*) I want it to be this one—not only because *The Man Who Copied* is a scrappy little picture but because it's also charming, funny and ultimately hopeful.

You may discover these qualities both in Furtado's filmmaking and in the personality of his lead actor, the extraordinary Lázaro Ramos. Best known for his nervy performance in the 2002 *Madame Satã*—the biopic about a notable Brazilian street fighter, family man and drag artiste—Ramos here plays someone who is similarly volatile, though far more ingenuous. On the sweet side, his character, André, lives companionably with his mother in a poor but decent section of Porto Alegre. He dreams of making money as a cartoonist, educates himself with whatever scraps of knowledge come his way and fumbles in embarrassment whenever he tries to chat up a woman. "Women are smart," he observes glumly in voiceover. Somehow, they always figure out that he has neither money nor prestige, a fact that brings us to André's sour side: his feelings about his job.

Bored and humiliated by his work in a tiny shop where he runs the photocopier, André is always one facial twitch away from glowering at his boss, whom he has secretly renamed the Blob. So great is Ramos's skill as an actor that he can show contempt for the boss as André himself would—efficiently—moving his face as little as possible so the aggression barely shows. Nevertheless, the rage is present; and it helps to make credible the steps that André soon takes into danger, as he first spies on Sílvia (Leandra Leal), a young shopgirl who lives across the way from his apartment, and then begins to stalk her.

By this stage of the movie, André has told the viewer about a catastrophic outburst of violence in his childhood, and the camera has joined him as he goofs around with a buddy who lives as a petty criminal. Despite these edgy qualities, André seems more puppyish than creepy as he follows

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Sílvia. His intentions are benign—as they remain later, when he wants to impress her and therefore needs the impossible sum of thirty-eight bucks. All that's required, he realizes, is a borrowed bank note and a late-night session with the photocopier. No big deal—but the balance now begins to shift between André's good will and his potential to cause harm.

If you have seen earlier films by Jorge Furtado, most notably his brilliant short from 1989, *Isle of Flowers* (*Ilha das Flores*), you may anticipate two things about *The Man Who Copied*. The first is that it sympathizes, in a thoroughly unsentimental way, with the plight of a man who has only impractical ways to lay hands on wealth: counterfeiting, drug dealing, armed robbery and the lottery. (I feel I'm giving away nothing when I tell you that André tries three out of four.) The other thing you may expect is that *The Man Who Copied* will pop off the screen, thanks to montage like a crazed jack-in-the-box. You never know when Furtado will spring on you a fantasy image, an art history reference, an ironic how-to demonstration or an animation of André's drawings. (The latter elements, directed by Allan Sieber, have a *Simpsons* look, except for the photomontage effects used whenever Eleanor Roosevelt shows up. André is fascinated by her.) A born film-cutter, Furtado has found a natural outlet for his talents in the character of André—a man whose ideas of the world are fragmentary, formed from whatever material he copies—and in the economic engine of André's society, which is driven by an alternating current of credence and fraud.

You might think of Furtado's scrambled chronology as an extension of this montage technique. The movie starts, very cannily, at what appears to be the end of the story, with the burning of André's counterfeit bills. The true narrative place of this incident is one aspect of the film I did not anticipate. Nor did I foresee that Furtado might sustain some of his shots rather than chop them up, and so create a scene as beautiful as that of André's stroll with Sílvia beside the harbor, where a long-delayed confession of yearning takes place beneath the glow of a silver-gray sky, beside unquiet green waters.

The visual sheen of that moment moved me—but I was touched even more by the emotional interplay between Sílvia and André, who finally manage to speak to each other by talking about Shakespeare's Sonnet 12. It's brand-new to both of them. André, who is unschooled, confesses he doesn't understand it, and Sílvia, who acts as his guide, has had to put in advance work with a dictionary to piece together the meaning. By the scene's end, though, the characters both know what the poem has to do with them—and what they now take to heart impels them through the end of the story.

I like an urban-depths, sex-and-crime movie that puts the blame for violence on William Shakespeare. I also like a movie that allows young working-class people such a moment of reflection and makes it credible. Say what you will about this month's pop hit—I will maintain a nonprejudicial silence—but it seems to me that Furtado's Porto Alegre has everything you'd want in a sinful city: cartoon thrills, to be sure, but also minds and hearts.

Transfer Furtado's bruised lovers to a burner on high heat, fold into their criminality an imminent apocalypse (perhaps real, perhaps hallucinated), add equal splashes of police procedural and science-fiction thriller, then strain through a mesh of Korean political history. I give you the recipe, sort of, for Jang Jun-Hwan's *Save the Green Planet!*, which opens (presumably on a dare) on April 20 at New York's Film Forum.

Depending on how you think of it, *Save the Green Planet!* is either the story of the revenge kidnapping of a vicious industrialist, or else it is the tale of a last-ditch effort to ward off rampaging creatures from Andromeda. At least, those are the interpretive choices available to the average viewer. The protagonist, Lee (Shin Ha-Gyun), does not distinguish between them, being the type of pill-popping loser who designs his own alien-catching outfits: protective ponchos made from plastic garbage bags, antitelepathic miners' helmets encrusted with gizmos from an Erector set. Aided by a none-too-bright girlfriend (Hwang Jung-Min) he picked up in a circus, he snatches the CEO of Yuje Chemicals (Baek Yun-Shik) and carries him off to a secluded rural area, there to be imprisoned in an underground torture chamber of an eclectic, cluttered, picturesque dilapidation to rival the inside of Lee's head.

The girlfriend, who is new to all this, momentarily looks nervous when Lee accuses his Andromedan captive of "being just like the others." The audience experiences a more protracted unease, once Lee begins documenting the CEO's case in a folder labeled "#13." For the most part, though, *Save the Green Planet!* holds you back from judging Lee by plunging you into his point of view. It ventures outside

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his mental framework mostly when narrating the police investigation—and since the majority of the cops are casually, stupidly corrupt, the distance achieved is slight.

More of a suspense thriller than a comedy or parody, more of a delirium than anything else, *Save the Green Planet!* sometimes appears to have no purpose in its artfully disarranged mind other than to melt together as many genres as possible. Ultimately, though, the film does pose a question: What on earth can account for the severity of human suffering? The closer you get to Lee's feelings—which will be recognizable, I suspect, to many Koreans of his generation—the more you wonder that we can think of such pain as arising normally, rather than being imposed from outer space.

Do we shirk responsibility merely by entertaining the question? Yes, says the captive CEO (or Andromedan—whatever), as he repeatedly taunts Lee. But the accusation doesn't stick. "They tell me I'm just getting these ideas from movies," Lee says during a speed-freak monologue (perhaps speaking both for himself and for the flamboyantly imitative Jang). "But," he adds darkly, "who made those movies?"

The new Drew Barrymore–Jimmy Fallon vehicle *Fever Pitch* was directed by Peter and Bobby Farrelly, but it is not, I'm sorry to say, a true Farrelly Brothers comedy. Although reminders of their past work sometimes erupt (a word that comes to mind readily when one thinks of the authors of *There's Something About Mary*), the mild and benevolent script is the work of Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel, who offer a very high ratio of good advice to mischief.

The advice has to do with developing a mature, monogamous relationship. Fallon, you see, is a relatively impecunious Red Sox fan ("one of God's most pathetic creatures"), and Barrymore is a fast-advancing career woman who cares nothing for baseball. To get past their shaky engagement and into a secure marriage, they must each grow up enough to yield something to the other. This premise puzzles me. I thought the appeal of Jimmy Fallon and Drew Barrymore was that they *haven't* grown up.

I smiled at the picture, sometimes. I thought it was harmless. But when I recall the class resentments and corporeal anxieties that the Farrelly Brothers used to express in their films—works that in this regard rival *The Man Who Copied* and *Save the Green Planet!*—I really miss *Dumb and Dumber*. ■

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PUZZLE NO. 2985

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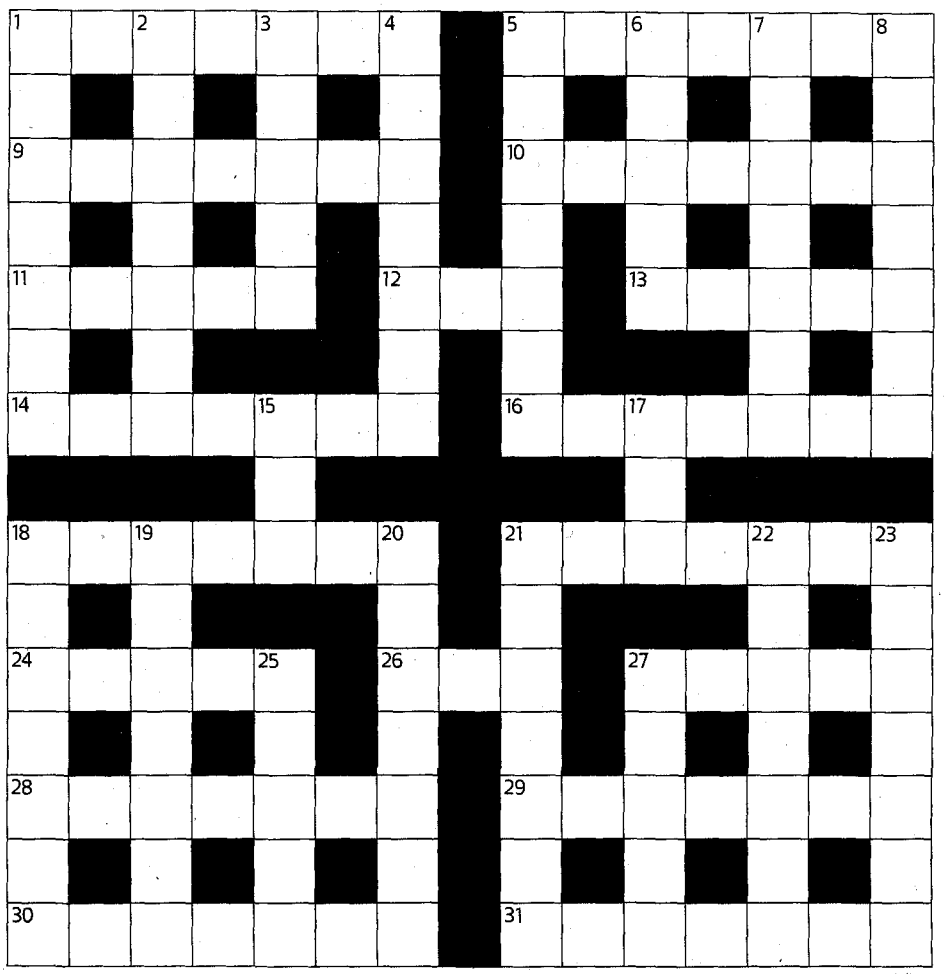

ACROSS

1 Boston poet, or perhaps Elbert the writer. (7)

5 Tickets may be what an early settler was, perhaps. (7)

9 Colors leaves on an island, possibly. (7)

10 Is the moving truck in the rain storm eternal bliss? (7)

11, 12 and **13** Part of a boxing event, and a boxing event in its entirety, which takes place everywhere! (5,3,5)

14 and **16** How to make bread in a way that shows thought is not connected with it. (7-7)

18 and **21** What one tries to make, when bringing the check book up to date, or loses in the downfall. (5,2,7)

24, 26 and **27** Part of the meal sounds cold, once it is confused around what might have brought it, to a point. (5,3,5)

28 Not so much in bed as in what some expect our home to be, as the sign might say. (7)

29 How some of our early settlers talked! (7)

30 Couldn't one sleep in them at night, as well? (7)

31 One point has a sort of danger, which gets you mad! (7)

DOWN

1 The part of the arm that one hears is a funny bone. (7)

2 In the mid-Atlantic, a wild bear gets around where you might get stuck. (7)

3, 15 and **25** Stay away from the kids! (And possibly duck!) (5,3,5)

4 Praised, sort of, despite having a feeling of hopelessness. (7)

5 Flatfish has a point as well as evil rising to it! (4,3)

6 Main artery, as seen in America or Taiwan. (5)

7 Proving a philosopher can get on with at least part of the company. (7)

8 Doggoned if it ain't what makes it dread to come out! (7)

15 See 3

17 and **27** Everything is obvious when this sound is heard after the siren does its job. (3,5)

18 Ill-chosen place for repose. (4-3)

19 No, it's old-fashioned to be around the evil sort, in such an unsophisticated way! (7)

20 Notice the visages around it? They may be just for show! (7)

21 The years of Agent James possibly when he was tied up? (7)

22 Care to be doing this? (Even a baby might be—or a mother, and run the wrong way to snitch on someone.) (7)

23 Get me up before it's over, and fixed up correctly for the editor. (7)

25 See 3

27 See 17

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2984

D	I	S	A	B	U	S	E	S		G	E	T	U	P
R		U		U		H		C		O		H		U
A	M	N	E	S	I	A		H	A	R	P	I	S	T
F		B		Y		M		O		E		E		I
T	H	E		B	A	R	D	O	F		A	V	O	N
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L	A	M	E	D	U	C	K		G	I	B	S	O	N
I				I		K		O		V				E
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I	N	R	O	A	D	S		L	O	B	E	L	I	A
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G	R	O	U	P		I	N	S	U	R	A	N	C	E

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Ann Zimmerman (Reporter), *The Wall Street Journal*
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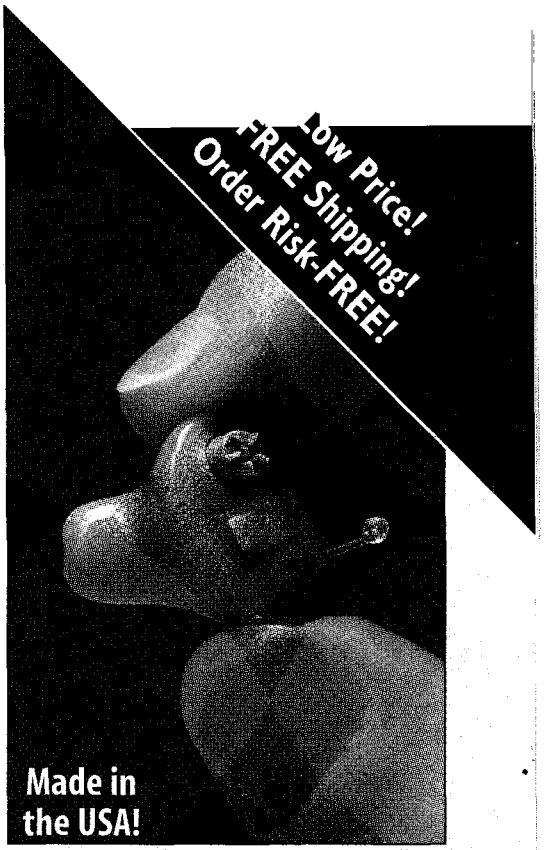

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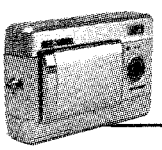
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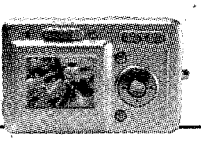
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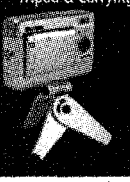

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